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ABSTRACT

This document presents a concise discussion of current thinking and practices in the area of group counseling in the schools. The material, divided into two sections is based on the discussion of a panel of counselor educators and practicing counselors. Part I consists of the discussion among the participants and Part II is composed of questions from an audience of members of the New York State Education Department staff. The panel shared their ideas of issues such as the goals of group counseling, various approaches and perspectives, the role of the counselor in the group, counselor self-disclosure, the screening of counselees, communication with parents and teachers, and training for group counselors. Questions dealt with subjects such as the effectiveness and advantages of group counseling, composition of groups, screening of members, goal setting, various techniques, remedial vs. developmental functions of the counselor, counselor specialization and measurement of counseling effectiveness. No guidelines were established and no specific points were agreed upon by group members, but many ideas and perspectives were expressed. (RSM)

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GROUP COUNSELING

in the schools

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a panel discussion

CG 006 085

1970

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK/THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

BUREAU OF GUIDANCE/ALBANY, NEW YORK 12224

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A PANEL DISCUSSION

February 7, 1969

The University of the State of New York
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
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Albany, New York 12224

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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FOREWORD

Group work is becoming increasingly important in guidance. Group counseling is gaining advocates as counselors explore its possibilities and gain confidence in its value and feasibility. The growth of group counseling began partly as counselors tried to serve more children and make optimal use of their time. Its continued growth is due to the realization that group dynamics differ greatly in kind and degree from individual dynamics, and group experiences add a new dimension to the counselor's role.

Participation in a group is an experience in growth. It is in groups that one learns to respond more easily as a person and to respect others as persons. One learns who he is through others' evaluation of him. One satisfies certain psychological needs in a group -- needs for acceptance, peer-approval, and self-expression. One can work through his feelings of hostility and negativism safely in the permissive atmosphere of the group, and arrive at deeper insights about himself and more wholesome attitudes toward others.

This document is presented by the Bureau of Guidance as a concise discussion of current thinking and practices in the area of group counseling. The material is based on the discussions of a panel of counselor educators and practicing counselors. The panel was convened by the Bureau of Guidance on February 7, 1969, and consisted of the following participants:

George Schmidt, Elementary School Counselor
Three Village Central School, Setauket, New York
Byron Matteson, Junior High School Counselor
Kenmore City Schools, Kenmore, New York
David G. Zimpfer, Assistant Professor
College of Education, University of Rochester
Benjamin Cohn, Director
BOCES, Putnam County
E. Victor Boyd, Associate in Education Guidance
State Education Department

The panel on group counseling in the schools was conducted in two parts. The first was a discussion among the participants. The second part was open to questions from an audience of members of the State Education Department staff. To provide structure to the second portion of the presentation, topical headings were inserted to highlight the discussion.

Special recognition is due David G. Zimpfer who prepared the document from the tapes of the panel discussion. General supervision for preparation and publication has been provided by E. Victor Boyd, Associate in Education Guidance.

PART I

PRESENTATIONS

Boyd: Ben, as we talked informally before the panel started, you made some remarks which could well set the stage for the discussion today on group counseling in the schools. Would you be willing to share these with the panel?

Cohn: Yes. Many counselors approach group counseling without a clear frame of reference. I prefer to organize my group counseling around the self-concept. This point of view stresses that youngsters have problems because of a difficulty with their self-concept, and that this self-concept is formed by the very important people in their lives: parents, siblings, peers, and teachers. This gives me a guideline to start doing group counseling, and it suggests three steps in the process to help the child: (1) to understand what his self-concept is, (2) to see why the self-concept is the way it is, and (3) to plan what he is going to do about it. This last is really a re-educative process.

In the first phase, then, I am helping them express themselves more realistically; when this has been started I move into the second phase: i.e., What are some of the reasons you feel this way about yourself? I end up the process by suggesting ways, or having the group suggest ways, of changing their behavior. This is basically the way I approach all of my groups.

Zimpfer: To focus on self-concept is to focus on ultimate objectives in counseling. I do not believe that counselors should propose only these long-range goals for their counseling, especially if they hope to assess their daily work. Much of our group counseling research has faltered, I believe, because the goals were too distant for the process. Practitioners need to plan for a long-range impact, but also need a set of more immediate goals, and intermediate goals, in counseling. I would propose more specific behavioral or attitudinal changes, especially of an interpersonal type. We are in fact involved in a social atmosphere continuously. Our effort in group activities can be to help youngsters become considerably more sensitive to the kinds of impact they have on others and the kinds of reactions that others have toward them. These in turn contribute to a more positive self-concept as an ultimate goal.

Cohn: I would have a group meet only over a period of 12 sessions. After a couple of sessions in orientation and testing, identifying what the group will be doing, the members will be asking self-concept questions. For the next two or three sessions they will talk about self-concept and then gradually go more into the "why's." By the 8th or 9th session they start the educative process, asking essentially, "Now that we are closing, what are we going to do with all that we have learned so far about ourselves?" This counseling is not a long-range kind of thing. It has to be done in a period of 12 sessions or 24 at the most, but we break group counseling into a 12 session block, each one being terminated before the next begins.

Zimpfer: You may be misconstruing what I suggest. I am not proposing group counseling as an interminable process. I am suggesting, as you are, that in our schools it is, in fact, a short-range process. It may be as short as two or three sessions. But I maintain that its goals need to be adapted to the length and intensity of the process. I am not comfortable with proposing basic self-concept changes in 12 sessions. While it is true I use a self-concept perspective in working with groups, the particular purposes will be spelled out in more immediate terms rather than in generalized self-concept terms; my strategy and techniques implement the shorter-range purposes.

Boyd: Ben, were you talking primarily about what a re-educative process would be for youngsters for whom there are already some deficiencies, some limitations?

Cohn: I think that if they are adolescents they are already in a problem area with their self-identity.

I would expect counseling changes to develop gradually, with one or two sessions a week at most, given time in between to think over what we discussed; to clarify and organize, and to make the process a real process.

I do tend to be more mechanical in my approach. There are things I am aiming for -- things I want the group to achieve as we move along. Hopefully by the end of the 12 sessions they have accomplished something. It is not open-ended without specific goals. Perhaps this meets your objection, Dave.

Schmidt: The procedures Ben talks about seem appropriate for junior high school age or above. But with 4th, 5th and 6th graders, it is not feasible to set a certain number of sessions, or have the youngsters define their own problems, or discuss how they feel about themselves. It takes a little more time at the elementary school level for the counselors to actually realize what is going on, and it takes a great deal of interaction in the group for them to realize what the process is like. Primary age children might not even profit from an interactive process, especially a longer one. I would want to be flexible about setting a number of sessions.

Matteson: I agree. There is no magical number of sessions, at least, based on my experience. Even so-called "average" groups -- those which do not include disturbed youngsters -- move at different speeds. While improvement in the self-concept is a basic objective, I think we are confronted with more immediate needs when we are asked by our administrators or by a group of teachers to start a group. More objectives and immediate goals must be set, so that the administrators or teachers can see what is happening. While the over-all objective is getting these children to function a little bit better, possibly through changing the self-concept, the immediate goal which you might set out (and not even accomplish in 12 sessions) would be the more adequate functioning in the school setting.

Cohn: I agree with all you are saying. Perhaps I did not state my point clearly. The 12 sessions with the three steps is merely a beginning point, a point of orientation for me. If it takes 8 sessions or 10 sessions for an acting-out group to get through the period of testing the counselor, I would still plan on the 12 sessions and begin the closure phase. But if they begin to move by the end of the 12 sessions, then I say, "Okay, let's continue on for another 12 sessions if you would like". It gives me something on which to evaluate. I know in each phase what I am aiming for; I can tell whether to continue or to begin to close. If the group is not functioning, I may want to stop the group. But I have told them how many sessions they were going to have, and they can do what they like with those sessions; whether they continue is something else.

I am also not afraid of manipulating. It makes me feel a little more comfortable when I can say I have reached a certain point with this group: With four of the kids I am here but the other four I am not so far. I then know I have to move some and hold others. It may take me one, or two, or three sessions to know what I have to work with.

Zimpfer: It is essential for the counselor to work with what is comfortable for him. He feels confident in the approach with which he works best.

One of the perspectives that guides me continually is that I am not trying to produce the fully functioning person by the end of a particular series of sessions, however long that series may be. To me that is part of the essence of developmental counseling, and I cannot afford to let a need to be helpful actually take over my relationship with counselees. I am quite willing at the end of whatever number of contacts I have with youngsters -- let it be 2 or 5, 12 or 20 -- to feel as though I have contributed to something which they and I can identify as a useful step, a partial movement in the self-actualizing process. At the same time, I have hope that I may have further contact in order to continue the process later. Another perspective for me is the humility of realizing that I am not the only change agent, or the only significant influence agent in the life of this youngster. In my own setting up of groups and working with groups, I want to determine some of the specific contributions that I can make, some of the specific advantages that the setting up of this kind of a process can provide.

I think you also, Ben, have specific goals for your group counseling, although you have talked about it in general self-concept terms. We recognize full well that the self-concept is emerging, evolving. We are not going to have the end product by the conclusion of our sessions, and we are not the only ones having an impact on it.

Cohn: I think you are right. One of the goals I am continually striving toward is open communication and looking at one's self realistically.

I am really trying to get counselees to be aware of their self-concept, be able to deal with it, and make decisions based on it. This is, of course, the basic role of counseling. I just feel more comfortable if I know that I have time to do it and that there is a plan involved. I feel more comfortable when I know I have a full 12 sessions and can take my time. I find that I get too anxious the first session if I am trying to accomplish too much. I'll push too hard and some counselees may withdraw. This happens occasionally when I am demonstrating. I find it better to be able to just sit back and say to myself, "Look, I've got plenty of time, I don't have to worry about this; let them use any vehicle they like. Let them test each other. Don't get involved."

Boyd: How much of an active role do you plan then in your proceedings?

Cohn: A very active role. I think my counseling has been described as hitting the kids over the head with a hammer. I stay right with them, except the first two or three sessions where I relax and sit back. I clarify the vehicles they choose, I keep them moving, and I try to make them more aware of some of the techniques they should be using, like talking about themselves instead of about kids like them. When they say, "We kids feel this way ...," I say, "Yes, John, but how do you feel?" This is pinpointing the process, teaching them the kind of things they should be doing in the group. Don't forget that they have to learn how counseling goes. Once we get moving, I will stay right with them about how they feel about themselves; I don't let them off the hook: "Let's talk about you," and "John, how do you feel about what Jim has been saying?" For those who are more non-directive, this is too much counselor involvement. Some say I don't let the counselees work it out. My answer is that in a school situation you don't have two or three years. You have 12 weeks before a holiday comes up, and this is going to hurt the process; you have 12 more weeks before another holiday or vacation comes up; and then you have 12 more weeks before summer comes up. If you don't make some gains that you can go back and build on before those vacation times, you are going to be set back for 5 or 6 sessions. This 12-week process fits the educational setting.

Schmidt: What grade level are we talking about, Ben?

Cohn: I am talking basically about 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th grade. The 11th and 12th graders, can carry the discussion pretty much themselves; but again they have to be taught techniques to be used in group discussion -- to clearly say what they are going to say, for example. With 5th and 6th grade groups I agree that you just have to sit back. These kids have to go through a lot of verbalizing before they reach a point that is important to them, that they are willing to latch onto for 30 minutes. Then they go off again on a tangent for another hour or two. But even at that time I know where I am going, when I allow them to go off. I am allowing them to go off. I am doing it because I think it is best for the group.

Zimpfer: Do you get an emergence of a group leader during the introductory two or three sessions and then have a conflict within yourself

whenever you want to take over this manipulative role?

Cohn: If there is an emergent leader, I may allow him to be a leader if it is for the interest of the group, but I am allowing it. I am still leader. And if a counselee gets to be too much of a leader and may be affecting the group, I step in. I don't think there is ever any time when I am not in control of my group. If I find I am not in control of my group I have to ask myself what I did wrong. Again, it is the mechanical process. Theoretically, it may not be the best way.

Zimpfer: I want to support you before you start backing off from your position.

Cohn: Thanks a lot, Dave. I worried about that. I hoped I wasn't backing off from anything.

Zimpfer: I thought you were trying to allow room for divergence of opinion, but I am going to give support to your thesis before you apologize for having a poor theory.

Cohn: You know me better than that. I don't plan to change anything, even if it does appear theoretically shaky.

Zimpfer: Well, let me try to give you support. First, I endorse the notion that the group has to understand what the process in fact involves. Second, at our program session together at the APGA Convention in 1967, one of the big points that came up was the problem of allowing the group to do pretty much what it wanted to do. This illustrates the need for some degree of counselor control. Think of the dangers that might be involved if a group of counselees said, "Hey, let's have a pot party together," or "Let's talk about XYZ subjects," which to the counselor may not be developmentally correct for them, or they may not be ready to deal with. The counselor is in the very awkward position of having to turn around and deny them the very freedom he gave them to start with. As a counselor you know what developmental needs and tasks are of present concern to your counselees. You probably have screened the counselees to some extent, either on the basis of prior contacts, or by interviews beforehand to get some feel for their needs and for their readiness. This gives you a picture of what is possible and might be a best direction for the group ...

Cohn: I don't screen my counselees before I see them, by the way, and I know there is a controversy over that. I'll take any 8 kids; in fact I'll just go out and pick up 8 kids if I decide to have that kind of group. In this kind of group I have to go through the first two or three sessions to know with whom I am working, where the strengths are, and where the weaknesses are. I hope I am correct in my appraisals of these on such limited data. I can say, for example, that one kid is too scared to be moved yet. Another kid has a great deal of strength; I know I can use him. The minute he gets scared I'm going to give support. I know who I'm going to get support from and who is going to keep cutting people down; I'll let him cut for a while knowing I've got the strength here to counter the cutting if I choose. Meanwhile the kid sitting in the middle here may be

doing nothing, but I'm not going to get him involved just yet. This all comes from the first couple of sessions as they talk about anything they want to talk about. They are testing each other, and I'm testing them too. Maybe I'm lazy and don't want to take the time to interview each kid and get the background on each kid; but I don't feel I have any better or worse success because of this approach than I had when I did psychological examinations and had social worker appraisals and other data on kids.

Zimpfer: You are right that there are arguments on both sides of the coin. The reasons for pre-interviewing the kids may be that you want to try to look more clearly into their needs, but on the other hand, these needs emerge pretty clearly in group sessions anyway. If you start off with pre-interviewing you may wind up sterilizing your early sessions. A pre-interview which is intended to clarify the counselee's problem or needs can actually block movement in those early meetings. They need that time to feel out each other and to locate common issues.

Let me put perspective in again. There are many different kinds of group situations. Some of them are primarily with the elementary school youngsters who I think function in different ways, and need to be dealt with in different ways from high school youngsters. We can use an open ended exploratory series which might simply put several individuals together and not make any particularly strong case for composing the group in certain ways. Or you deliberately may want to compose groups in certain ways. You may want to set up certain roles to be present. You may want certain conditions to be present. The structure and the composition may flow from varying purposes. I am suggesting that group counseling has many different faces and it doesn't have a particular kind of image. It doesn't have to be done only in one limited or restricted kind of way; a variety of things can be done.

Cohn: Let's set our boundaries here. I think that what you are saying is true. However, I think that a group counselor needs a basic philosophy, or approach, that he can vary procedurally yet have a core that he knows he is going to stick with. The approach, for example, can vary according to age level, but the self-concept principle will still hold. You will still ask the kid how he feels about himself but it may take longer to develop. Different kinds of activities or vehicles will be needed. Different topics will be discussed. A counselor ought to know when he faces a group that he has a certain job to do and he should know where he is going. I find often that when I watch counselors they cannot explain why they did certain things. Their counseling ought to fit into a pattern. If it doesn't, it is unfortunate. If you allow something to go on you should know why you are allowing it to go on, or at least be thinking about it while the counselee is talking, "Am I going to allow it or am I not going to allow it?" Silence, for another example, is only valuable if it's being used to move the group or to have something happen. It is of no value if you are doing it because you don't know what to say. I think we do this too often.

Zimpfer: I'm disturbed, Ben, that you are not really listening. I hope we can make allowance for other approaches.

Cohn: I'm listening. I want to be sure we understand that even though there are many ways to do good counseling the counselor must know when he goes into a group what his approach is going to be. He should have a total purpose to the way he is going to approach kids in general, and then he can go ahead and alter his style if he likes. Here is a sequence that bothers me -- A counselor will say, "Let's have a group." Then I say, "What are you going to do with the group?" "I don't know; we're going to try to make the grades better." "Well, how are you going to do that?" "We're going to sit and talk." "What are you going to do with these kids while they are talking?" "Well, I'll just use techniques when they come up." "But where are you going with the kids? Where are you going to be four sessions from now?" "Oh, I don't know, wherever they take me." This bothers me. It may be 20 sessions and they still don't know where they are going to be taken, and invariably what happens is that at the last session the kids say, "We told you all this stuff. Now what are you going to do about it?" Then counselors come back and say, "What shall I do next?"

Zimpfer: I agree with you that a counselor needs to be purpose-oriented. I want to be able to tailor what I am doing, and what is happening in the group, to meet the purposes. I will negotiate the purposes with the group to some extent, but I find myself acting in the role of an "engineer" within the group, and am quite willing to. You use the term "manipulate" and I use the term "engineer." These are loaded terms that may trouble readers, but we don't mean the kinds of nasty things people are likely to impute to such terms. I agree with you on the notion of laying down a basic approach which you can identify and which gives you a sense of what you are doing and when you are doing it. You can explain why you are doing what you are doing and judge whether it works.

Cohn: Dave, you came in very near the beginning of this group counseling movement with Ohlsen and the rest of us. When we get into a conference, or work with a group there is very little difference among us. I think this happened with Stan Caplan, too. It seems the more experience you have the more you move toward a structured approach. What I am afraid of is that as we talk about it we may be leaving too many openings for misunderstanding. I don't want people to come in and say, "You said you don't have to do so-and-so." I remember when I was counseling in practicum, I came with a problem to my supervisor: "What do I do next? The kids have reached this point. What do I do with them?" He said, "Just keep working with them." I felt very lost at that point. All I was doing was keeping the counselee moving, not knowing where we were going. I felt I should know where I ought to be going with them. Probably, if you watched my group you would find I am not nearly as structured as I sound.

Zimpfer: One of the things I sense that I am doing as we are talking here is trying to give counselors who read this report an opportunity to look at group counseling as offering many different possibilities to them. There is a wide variety of types of activity which focus primarily on a person's interpersonal behavior, interpersonal attitudes, or ways of thinking about himself which can be handled well in a group atmosphere. There is a wide variety of things that can be done. I am trying to paint the wider scene to give counselors more leeway to think about their group

activities rather than to say there is only one certain thing that can be done or only one certain group than can be worked with. I'm quite willing, for example, to look at the idea that Faust has come up with on his feeling classes. I am willing to take a look at sensitivity groups. I am willing to look at open ended exploratory groups which have no specific function except to make youngsters more aware of what the group process is all about. I am quite willing to try to use group procedures, and the advantages that group procedures offer to get at certain kinds of youngsters who seem to be impervious to other treatment.

Cohn: I am coming with the opposite point of view. I am afraid of what is going on today under the name of group counseling. I agree there are many possibilities, but I don't think counselors are well enough trained in the group process to be able to attempt all these things and do them effectively. When I teach a course I say, "Learn how I do it first and then if you want to deviate, fine." I insist they know my way and can do it my way fairly well before they start experimenting. Then they will say, "I can't be like you," which is okay. I say "Don't be like me; be yourself, but after you learn my way." It is a difference in orientation. I think yours is much broader. I want to be sure we have confidence in at least one approach before we go out and start doing sensitivity training with teachers where we may ruin the program in the whole school, or take on a group counseling program in a school that falls on its face because that one group wasn't properly handled. I think we lose a lot of counselors because their experience was bad. We almost ought to guarantee that their experience is going to be good; then as they get more experience they can experiment and broaden out into more areas. I am talking for the people I know in the schools. I wish they would try it mechanically first, then begin to open the gates and see what more they can do and learn from their experience, rather than come in and act as if they know it all.

Matteson: My experience with a couple of semiexperienced counselors has been that if you give them the entire picture of what the objectives for their group can be, they try to work for it; but if they don't reach this, they become discouraged and they won't do it again. I have tried it recently with another counselor and suggested she just get them together. Instead of calling it group counseling, call it group discussion. She got her feet wet and felt successful. Now she is beginning to branch out as you say, but she first had to have some feeling of success.

Cohn: My first question is: who watched her techniques and were her techniques adequate? I may be an oddball, but again I think techniques are equally as important as relationship. If you don't use good techniques you are really doing something different from counseling, I am afraid. Maybe because of your knowledge you will be able to reach the goals of counseling, but I stress techniques. I stress the things that move a group, like clarification, reflection of feeling, and other "lead" behaviors. I think counselors have to know and have to use them, and have to be able to use them well; they must become so fluent with these that it is automatic. I almost role-play when I am with a group. I can really be involved in a role that I see myself in: I really become their father if that is what they are talking about. I really become the teacher they are discussing, or I will become the kid that is talking to a teacher.

I think techniques are important. I think role playing is important. The use of extremes is a good technique. Clarification is extremely important when the group gets really involved and you want them to concentrate on one thing. Reflecting the feeling right back to an individual is important. If a counselor knows this -- and I think this comes with experience -- he can do things with groups. They don't do them well on their own. One of the comments in a teachers' group we have was, "We could have these meetings every week but it wouldn't be the same without you." "Now what do I do?" I asked. "Well, I don't know what you do but it seems to be different. We seem to stay on the topic more." That's pretty important. I think most groups will deviate and some people will get lost in the group because the discussion has gone off on a tangent. The counselor's role is to keep it right there on a topic -- any topic they want to discuss is fine as long as it is self-involvement. Talking about cars, for example: what does a car mean to you? That is what I'm going to aim at. They may all be talking about their cars but the point I am going to be harping on is: How does having your car make you feel, and why is it so important that we have a car? How does it make you feel? I know what I am going to be doing each time and I am using a technique to do this.

Matteson: So do you vary your leadership role at all depending upon the basic composition of the group?

Cohn: Well, if I have a very active group, I back out. By the 7th or 8th session I hope they can run the group almost by themselves. I get less involved as the group goes along.

Matteson: I asked that because you mentioned the teacher group. In other words, even with this teacher group then, although you are the leader of this group, you will back out?

Cohn: Yes, but if they get off the topic, I will come in again with a comment like: "Well, we were talking about so-and-so though. Let's go back to that." Then I back out again.

Matteson: We have experienced this in team teaching: If the leader is withdrawing from the group, another individual in the group will just dominate. Is it because the counselor hadn't constructed a good group counseling situation here or was it because he was too little the leader?

Cohn: People haven't learned to communicate concisely. We need to learn how to cut through imprecise and qualifying statements. One of my techniques would be, "Well, John, I don't know what you are saying. Say it again, so you don't qualify quite as much." If I'm real strong I might say, "Gee, I think I know what you are saying but try it one more time." and the person comes right to the point. You know, quit the garbage, what are you really saying. But most people have to be taught this skill.

Matteson: Is this "testing time" you were referring to going on in the whole group?

Cohn: Yes, it is. I call it testing, but actually, it seems to me, each person is saying something and then watching for the reactions of everyone else: Who am I going to get support from? In a beginning session they will talk to me. One of the techniques I'll use is to look down and when they are talking I won't even look at them. I will look over here and this will force them to find eye contact with someone else. Invariably they will, and if they get a nod from the other person, they have made a contact they feel happy with. They want this support from me but I try not to give it to them.

Matteson: So you are watching the reaction of one person to another whereas I am looking more to the reaction of a person within himself.

Cohn: It is a matter of feeling out the group to find what is available in the group.

Zimpfer: George, I feel that maybe you have some things you want to get in but haven't had a chance.

Schmidt: This is my second year in group counseling with elementary school children. I think I could agree a great deal with Ben in what he is saying on the training of counselors to give them some stepping-stone, or some jumping-off place in techniques, and working with techniques. Because the group work I am involved in came up rather suddenly and I hadn't really had that much preparation, I found that I was using individual techniques with the groups in the beginning: reflection, clarification, and such, almost on a one-to-one basis within the group. It wasn't until I got more experience that I started using different techniques involving the other members of the group and their interaction with one another. However, I think you, Ben, probably still stay with the almost one-to-one type of lead in manipulating the youngster to get him to interact.

Cohn: I don't know what you mean by staying with the "one-to-one."

Schmidt: You mention not looking at a person in the group so that he is forced to look at another person to find eye contact. You work on the individuals of the group in the testing period in the beginning almost on a one-to-one basis.

Cohn: My thinking is in terms of one-to-one. I ask: "How much strength does he have? What areas do I have to stay away from?" I am learning my "orchestra" by learning what the pieces sound like.

Matteson: Ben, do you think this might be partly due to the fact that the youngsters are unscreened?

Cohn: Yes, except I don't think screening gives you that much information. For example, I don't see how you can find how strong a kid is. Or, a kid may be seen as a very withdrawn child as far as teachers are concerned, but when he comes into a group and gets support from two or three others he may become your demon. All the stuff he has had pent up bursts out because he has support now. I still lean toward not doing too much

preparation in advance. If I find an isolate who quietly sits there and is being resented by the other kids, I've got to handle that in the group and try to get him involved. If I can't, I have to ask him to leave, or I change the situation. This can be done in various ways: start another group, or change the composition of the group, or if I have a neurotic pairing where two kids support each other(and there is no way of knowing this in advance) I handle that too. We have learned enough techniques about group process to now handle almost any kind of problem that comes up in a group. We use the group: they discipline themselves, they control the process, they choose the topics. If a group is not moving, I have two kinds of questions: (1) How do you people feel about the leader here? Just make believe I'm not here. Let's talk about the guy who's leading us. How do you feel about him? and (2) How do we feel about each other? Let's talk about each person in the group to try to find out where the problem is. We know that when a group is not functioning something is wrong with the group -- either the leader or the members. We must find the problem. When we do, if it is something that the group cannot handle, or will not handle, then the counselor must make a decision to disband this group and reorganize. This may result in two groups, one for those who want to be in the original group and those who want to be in another group. It may be hard on the kids, but I think you have to make decisions that are going to be best for the group in the total process. You can't help every kid all the time. I have accepted this now.

Matteson: When you pick these kids, Ben, is there any communication with the parents prior to forming the group?

Cohn: It depends upon the school system. If the school system is considering group counseling as part of their regular daily program, no. In this case, if the kid comes in for counseling the parents aren't notified. If the parents feel pretty good about the guidance program, whatever you do is fine including the group counseling which is part of it. If you have a parent group that is always questioning what the school is doing and wanting to be informed, then I go through a process of notifying the administration, the teachers, the kids, and then the parents. I have meetings with parents and kids and then make the final selection of the group. At this point, I expect to have plenty of support. This last approach is really better, by the way. You can't fail with a group after you have gone through this process: clear with the administration; pick your kids from the list of names teachers have referred to you; go to all your classes and get volunteers; invite in the parents of all those who have volunteered; then make the parents call back a week later to get their kids into it; make your selection at this point. You can't fail. The parents are home pushing the kids to make more progress, the teachers are looking at them, and the administration wants it to work. At the end of the series you have another conference with the parents and you discuss what you have learned about these kids.

Boyd: Could the four of us say to a beginning counselor that this is something we would recommend? I have never met with failure when I went through that process of informing teachers, administrators, the children, and then the parents.

Cohn: Well, you don't have to. The kids also talk it up. If you have success, the kids will flock to get into counseling, and the parents will call and ask to get their kids involved.

Zimpfer: You started talking at one point as though it was kind of a defensive move that you were making. This is needed if you are in a school situation where parents are questioning the direction you are taking. I think every counselor is trying to develop a receptivity for the strengths he feels he is able to offer. He may start out defensively but he needs really to be developing a receptive climate. The more of our procedures and activities we can get accepted and supported the more positive expectations we build. The more of those that you build the more success you ensure before you even start.

Boyd: If we can establish this program, it's going to sell itself and then we no longer have to go through an elaborate public relations process. I didn't do this the first time and we had quite a bit of resistance, not from parents but from faculty; and then the religious element entered into it.

Cohn: Yes, I ran into the same thing. I want to repeat my message about including teachers in the process. The teachers will ask how counseling is progressing, and these kids are going to talk about it. They are talking about you as a representative of the adult world. I find that the more I talk to teachers about the process the more support we have.

Schmidt: Perhaps one means of educating the teachers would be inservice courses in group counseling. In our district we have sensitivity groups which are offered as inservice courses. They are quite popular. It becomes less threatening to a classroom teacher when he is more aware of what is taking place. I found that in trying to move the program from one elementary school into others the resistance came more from the administrators. In a panel presentation for elementary principals on the Island last spring, the principals had doubts about group counseling. In counseling, where you have many youngsters who are deeply involved, and are in a free atmosphere where they can discuss pretty much what they like, this can be a threat to the teachers who in turn, may put pressure on the administrators. The inservice course is helpful, I think.

Cohn: Let me tell you what we did. You may want to criticize it because it is manipulative, but it worked very well. First of all we got the administration to agree to the program. Then I asked the administration to call a meeting of the teachers. We described what group counseling was, and what we were hoping to do with it. Then we asked the teachers to give us a list of the kids who they thought could benefit from group counseling. Then we went to all the 7th grade classes and I gave a talk about what group counseling is. I mentioned how we would be talking about those things which are keeping us from doing as well in school as we should. I asked, "How many of you here could do better in school if you really tried?", and of course almost every kid raised his

hand. I asked those who would like to be involved in group counseling to sign a paper. Then we wrote letters to the parents inviting them in to an evening meeting to discuss group counseling.

That was the most crucial part of it because in discussing group counseling you can talk about what you hope to gain. But as you talk about it the parents are beginning to think about group therapy, about grabbing their kids and changing them. You've got to have your answers prepared in advance. You can predict the questions, because the same ones come up at every session with the parents. You have to admit you don't know what's going to happen. You hope it will all work out well. At the end you will have another meeting to discuss the results. Then you tell the parents that if they want their child involved in group counseling they must call the school by next Thursday and volunteer the child. Parents will come up immediately and say, "We want our kid to be involved now." You say, "No, I am sorry, I can't do it now. You must call the school." This will make the parent go home and think about it, and talk about it, and then make a group decision. From those names that you have from the parents who called, you select your group. Actually you are selecting the same kids you were going to select originally, except that you are now restricted to the final group whose parents call. In other words, if you had 24 kids who needed it, 20 of these kids now have their parents' permission as well as their own motivation, and you form the group from the 20.

The meeting at the conclusion of counseling is a very interesting one because parents now want to know what you did during the sessions. The kids won't tell them and you have to keep this very general. But if those two meetings with the parents work out well you won't be able to stop the program in your school. It will become a part of your program that is there to stay.

The biggest thing that will happen is that kids will begin to talk at home, not about the group, but they will begin to open up. When they do, the parents are going to notice it; and when they notice it that is great for them and they will support your program.

Boyd: Do you encourage this, Ben?

Cohn: We can rehearse an approach to parents right in the group. I can say, "Okay, you have a problem at home. There is something that you can do about it: You can tell your parents how you feel."

"How would you do it?"

"Well, I'd go in and I would say so and so."

"How would you react now if you were the parent and I came home and said that to you?"

"We can role play the whole situation and practice it. Kids learn these things easily."

Zimpfer: Now your parent and teacher consultations become important because you are preparing the milieu for the different behavior of the kids.

Cohn: Right. That's a very good point, Dave. If your teachers are not ready for this when a kid comes in and says, "I don't have my homework," the teacher blasts the kid. We can go back to the group and discuss it next week, but the teacher should know these changes are part of the process. The teachers try to help the kids rework some of their behavior, and expect changes.

Zimpfer: What ground rules do you set up at the beginning of counseling?

Cohn: There are three statements I make at the very first session. I start by saying that we are involved in group counseling now and we are going to talk about those things which may keep us from doing as well in school as we'd like. The three rules are: (1) You can't destroy school property; (2) You can't hit each other and you can't hit me (they always laugh at that); (3) I am going to try to keep this as confidential as possible. Then I add, "Now you can go out and talk about what you say in the group but you have no right to discuss the kinds of things that these guys are talking about without their permission." The first question always is, "Why do you have a tape recorder?" I say simply, "I have it here because I want to learn more about the group, and I also want to get some help if I'm doing anything wrong. Okay, any other questions?" And that is all I say. If a structuring lasts more than 30 seconds you've almost killed it. You just go on from there. You develop guidelines from that point on. Any rules you make after that should be group initiated. For example, if a kid keeps moving his chair and keeps disturbing the group, I ask the group how they feel about it and how should we handle this.

One other question they ask is, "Can we hear ourselves on the tape."

Matteson: Do you let an individual who has missed a session come back and listen to the tape?

Cohn: I don't know. I have never had that occur. They have asked if they can hear themselves the next week. I put it on and run it about 15 minutes. They are bored to death and I turn it off.

Matteson: I use the recorder because it helps me and I can take it home. But I also have it in the office in case one of the counselees misses a session; he can make it up. I have had them come in and ask to listen to it, and they do during their study hall.

Cohn: I encourage them to do it but I don't find that it changes their behavior the next session. They still spend a certain amount of time reorienting themselves to the group process.

Matteson: I had one boy who constantly would miss the day he was scheduled for group counseling and then he would come in and listen to the tape. He seemed to be benefiting from what the group was talking about but he really wasn't going to participate. I stopped that behavior.

Cohn: I would stop it, too. I wouldn't allow him to do it.

Matteson: But you have to let him do it two or three times until you have checked the validity of his excuses. He wanted to be a part of it, but yet not a part of it.

Cohn: Of course, there is an advantage to not letting the individual hear the group. If I say, "You come to the group next week. If you want to know what we discussed last week, you ask. If the group wants to tell you they'll tell you." This teaches him to assert himself a little, and it also gives the group a feeling that they have some control. It is also good for the counselor to listen to the group tell him what they went over last week, because it is usually a lot different from the way the child pictured it.

Zimpfer: That's the same thing as the one who wants to linger a bit and talk with you.

Cohn: I don't allow that either. I walk out.

Zimpfer: That's right. It's the same basic principle, isn't it? You discourage any individual contacts other than this one in the group.

Cohn: I do.

Matteson: I do also, but I feel guilty about that because there are some kids that could benefit from the individual counseling along with it. I hope that they will find some other counselor to do this with. His job will be to get the kid to be able to talk about that kind of thing in the group. But denying individual contact is taking away a certain amount of support.

Schmidt: I have to, because I am the only counselor there.

Cohn: Then you have to, right. I recall a situation where the person wouldn't go to another counselor. It was a matter of trying to get him to understand why he wouldn't talk about this in the group. I needed to reinforce, to encourage him. The next week he would come in and he might say a little bit. Then he would come back in for an individual session and I'd reinforce again. After three sessions he was functioning better in the group. But you do run into those that want to do it every time. Eventually you just close the door.

Schmidt: Some of the kids that do it over and over are really asking for more of your time. They want attention. They want to be a bit special.

Cohn: I'll even manipulate to the point where the seating arrangement is important to me. There are days when I will go in and sit down first and put my tape recorder by my seat. There are other days that I will purposely stay out of the room until they get seated and then see what they have left me. There are other times when I'll wait, let them get settled and then go in and say, "John, I would like to sit here today. Why don't you sit over there?", and I will sit right between two people. There are different values here. When I sit first I watch to see who has enough courage to sit down next to me. If someone sits down next to me before the other chairs are all filled then I know something about this kid. If all the chairs are filled and the only ones left are next to me,

I can't really draw any conclusions at that point. If I see two kids that are supporting each other then I'll sit right between them.

Matteson: I think Dave taught me that. I have had the group come in and turn on the tape recorder and start when I wasn't even there. So the tape recorder was no longer a threat.

Schmidt: You can learn lots from the seating arrangements. I had a little girl who always sat next to me. On one occasion when I was already sitting, the youngsters came in and she sat down next to me. Meanwhile, I got up to do something away from the table; when I came back I sat in a different chair. She upped and came right over next to me again. From that point on I made sure there were not too many chairs and that when the kids came in I would always seat myself where she couldn't move. She was looking for a tremendous amount of support.

Boyd: Do you use a table in all of your sessions?

Schmidt: Yes, I usually do.

Cohn: I think the use of a table is more the function of the counselor than anything else. If the counselor feels more comfortable maybe he'd better have one. I don't go into a lot of interpretations about the presence of, or absence of, blocking ingredients like the table.

Schmidt: I would agree with you except for an experience with an emotionally disturbed group I have. I had a table, but they were extremely difficult to work with because the table was too small. It has to be the right size. We put the table away and sat them around in a larger circle and I still had the same trouble with them. But I found that I got very upset with them, and I didn't know where to go with them. I was really losing control so I just leaned forward in my seat puzzling it out. It was a surprise, but the kids moved right in close to me (and it wasn't because of the microphone on the floor). They came into a close, tight circle and we had a beautiful session. A counselor might want to experiment without a table, or with a table, and see what happens.

Cohn: I used to have a table all the time. We used doodle papers, but gave it up because some kids were doodling more than participating. But there are some groups you should use doodle paper with. It's great for them. It gives them something to do with their hands while they are thinking and talking, and it gives you some information from the paper. I have gotten away from the table. I'm going now to the open circle to see if it's not more effective.

I find some groups who will just move around the room, and yet still maintain some movement within the group. They may be looking at the bulletin board, or something that might be on my desk but they don't lose contact with the group.

Zimpfer: There isn't anything dogmatic about room arrangements. I think there are those on the one side of the coin who would want to have stiff-backed chairs in order to keep everybody alert, and there are

others who say they want to create the kind of warm, accepting, soft environment which demands plush chairs. There are still others who say, "Let's remove the structures which society uses, take chairs out altogether, and sit on the floor." There are big groups, small groups, lighted rooms, dimly lighted rooms, sometimes music. I think you have to explore this in terms of your own comfort and in terms of the group's receptivity and ask yourself, "Is it contributing to what I want to do?" If it is not contributing you have to experiment with different physical arrangements. The issue centers on whether a particular physical arrangement is contributing to the objectives you want, and what the group seems to need most of all to make it move.

Matteson: I think it is also a matter of effect, isn't it, Dave? Maybe the color of the wall is affecting the group. I have conducted experiments with two different groups, actually rotating the meeting place, which according to Lifton, isn't too beneficial; but because of necessity I had to move. We even used a corner of the cafeteria and I can't say it affected the group markedly.

Zimpfer: It depends on when you did it. If you did it after the group was pretty cohesive, you could do almost anything you like. If you change things a lot in the first few sessions, you may never get started.

Matteson: Then, is the equipment important in your estimation, Dave?

Zimpfer: Well I think it's consistency that matters in the beginning of a group more than anything else - the stability of the room and the situation.

Cohn: The only limit I would put on is not to have a group counseling session with junior high school kids in a science laboratory. That was the most grueling experience I ever had. They turned the gas jets on, the water faucets on. I was running from one place to another. I like a more confined space.

Zimpfer: I have made a pitch for consistency of physical environment. Ben, if you look at the statement you made awhile back about shifting around arbitrarily from place to place in the group, how is this consistent? The group establishes certain expectations about different affiliations around the group. I think for your own information gathering purposes you are deliberately moving around the group. This seems to be violating the consistency principle.

Cohn: That's okay as long as I violate the consistency principle for a purpose and know in advance what my aim is. If I have a group in a room that is next to another teacher's who is talking loudly, or one whom the kids may be threatened by and they feel they cannot get involved since they may be overheard, I may move the group for a purpose. I will not shift the group environment without knowing ahead of time why I am doing it. It is part of the process. When I move my seat, it is true that I am losing some consistency; but I may be dealing with something bigger. If my position is that important for consistency, I have to think

twice about moving. In a case like George's with the girl sitting next to him three or four times, you'd better find out what it's doing to her if you move. I mean, it is an important move.

The question I need to ask when I move around to different places in the group is: What am I trying to achieve? Am I just gathering information ad-lib, or am I specifically looking at what happens with one particular individual, or one particular pair, or one particular subgroup for the diagnostic value that it offers me about an individual or about a group? I would not walk into the group and arbitrarily change positions just to gather information I don't know I'm going to need. I would look at it purposefully rather than at random.

Do you change position, Dave?

Zimpfer: Yes, on occasion. If I'm interested, for example, in an individual who seems to be seeking a good deal of attention from me and I want to validate that, I would deliberately seat myself opposite him to see whether this allows him to focus more easily on me. We would have better eye-to-eye contact. Or, I would sit directly next to him to see whether he moves toward me, or moves his chair away, or whether he decides to talk to other people. I would use it primarily for providing better cues on an individual's status.

Cohn: If a kid is talking too much, or always interrupting, or moving his seat, I find it effective to sit next to him and just say, "Let the others talk." This is all you have to do to this kid and he stops. I couldn't do that if I sat across from him.

Schmidt: Do you wait for the group to harness him or do you actually harness him yourself?

Cohn: It depends on when the need appears. If it's late in the session and I can use the group, fine; but the group may never get to that point if he's a real dominator.

Zimpfer: One of the themes that runs through your discussion, Ben, which I buy wholeheartedly, is that the group needs to be taught exactly what a group procedure is all about, and exactly what varieties of roles and activities can be played. Members must become acquainted with the group process in order to pass on leadership functions to them.

Cohn: Responsibilities.

Zimpfer: Yes, so that eventually they initiate, and stimulate, and react to each other. The group may do as Barney said: they start taking up the sessions before you arrive.

Cohn: We had one group where five of the kids walked out on us. They didn't like something I was doing to them. It was my fault. The ones who were left agreed to bring in five other kids. When we started, I said, "How do we begin with five new kids in the group?" The three that stayed said, "Let us take over." They carried out the structuring. They

spelled out the roles these kids should play. They knew what they were supposed to be doing and they went ahead beautifully. I was quite impressed by how much they had learned about the group interactive process. When I first started working with groups, I didn't feel too confident that kids would pick this stuff up. But they do. They'll pick up things like reflecting feelings, clarification -- they'll probe this themselves.

Matteson: Have you ever explained, or expressed any of your own feeling as to why you reacted a certain way yourself in the group. For example, if you grab this boy, did you ever say, "Now I did that because I felt that I wanted to tell him to be quiet." Have you ever added any of your feelings?

Cohn: I try to stay as objective and distant from the group as possible. I become a catalyst, and try not to be involved. They do suck me in sometimes. I have a beautiful tape of a session where they couldn't seem to reach a certain point and I thought, "Gee, that point has to be made." I started lecturing and went on for four or five minutes making my point as strong as I could. But the minute I stopped they went on talking about something else.

Matteson: What if they ask your opinion?

Cohn: If they ask me, I've got to think quickly about whether I want to give them an answer. There are times I do tell them how I feel: "Now that's the way I feel. It may not be the way you feel about it." But generally I stay outside.

Matteson: And anytime you do get in it's role playing?

Cohn: I clearly identify it as being my feeling and not necessarily the feelings they should have, or anyone else should have; but I don't do it very frequently. They ask me, "Would you let your daughter stay out until one o'clock?" At that point I may decide to give them the feeling of an adult, a father; or I may decide to throw it back and say, "How would you handle it if you were the father?" It is very touchy. I find myself getting very anxious, when it happens to me, about whether I should answer it. How ungodlike I feel answering them!

Zimpfer: The research, Barney, on the whole business of counselor self-disclosure in counseling shows no really clear evidence that I have been able to sense from it. What we're looking at here, at least in part, is the dimension of social distance from the members of the group. Ben spoke about remaining aloof from the group -- at a distance from the group. If the aloofness comes across as "Don't touch me" or "I am not really interested in you," you are conveying something entirely different from what you intended. There are times when I feel most comfortable in modeling for the group exactly the kind of introspectiveness, or the kind of observations about myself, or sharing my own experiences with the group that I hope they will do. I find that this is helpful.

Matteson: I have found it very helpful to share my own feelings.

Cohn: I tend not to do that. That may be part of my problem, but I don't find it necessary. I set it up so that it is not necessary.

Boyd: What are the differences between an individual counseling situation and a group counseling session?

Cohn: I feel there is very little difference, but I think that your sensitivity has to be sharper. It has to be keener. As I tried to explain to a group of parents one time, group counseling was like a tri-level bridge structure situation on the New York State Thruway. You try to sit up above and look down to see where everybody is going, hoping that eventually these cloverleafs will come together. The coming together represents the kids' getting some mutual understanding of themselves. This is about the only difference I can come up with.

Boyd: What about training for group counseling?

Zimpfer: I am fully convinced that group counseling cannot be taught out of a textbook. Experiential involvement is really the only way.

Cohn: And supervision while you learn.

Zimpfer: When I say "experiential," I am including getting involved yourself in a group process which sharpens you to what is going on in a group -- you can feel it, brother, because you are a member, and you get a chance to talk this through with the group. It is "tuning in" a person more sharply and more acutely on what a group process is all about. Both experiential involvement in an ongoing group and a closely supervised experience do this. I'm not minimizing the importance of some textbook learning in order to put handles and perspectives and frameworks on what's happening, but this alone does not make the successful group counselor.

Cohn: My feeling is that the most important part of the training should be close supervision of group counseling experience. The counselor should work with a group and should have close supervision from someone else -- from an outside person. We've developed a little gimmick which you might be interested in. When a supervisor monitors an interview he needs both audio and video. The video can be a one-way screen or closed-circuit TV. The gimmick is the audio: a small, $30 wireless microphone which sends a signal into an FM radio -- a small pocket FM radio with an ear plug. The counselor working with the group has the earphone. The supervisor can give the counselor clues or questions to ask the group. A good example was yesterday morning when I worked with my group of emotionally disturbed kids. One of them said, "Johnny always gets in trouble in class." Then of course four or five kids jumped in and I lost control of the situation. My observer-supervisor said, "Ben, go back and find out what he means by trouble. Have him describe trouble." I did that. The beauty of it was that right there I was able to do something. Had I waited for the tape I would have had to wait until the next session to do it and the opportunity might not come up again. On-the-spot supervision and on-the-spot feedback, I think, is one thing we have never been able to do unless there are two people sitting in a room.

Zimpfer: You are talking about yourself, as a counselor, who is fairly comfortable with groups already and who can handle the cues coming in from the outside and who is able to decide how and when you are going to use them. I am not sure how comfortable a beginning group counselor would be in getting these cues coming at him from the outside.

Cohn: I don't know that he would be any less uncomfortable than he is sitting there without any help at all.

Zimpfer: My approach is to go into a co-counseling situation having the supervisor sitting in and conducting the session with the counselor.

Cohn: That's very difficult for me because when I co-counsel with another guy I take over no matter how hard I try not to.

Dave, you mentioned having a prospective group counselor become a member of a group to become better aware of his behavior. Would this come prior to the supervision or along with it? Where do you see this in the training of a counselor?

Zimpfer: They go in tandem. In supervision one can suggest techniques and strategies to the counselor, and also cause this counselor to take a long look at his own way of behaving in the group: the times that he happens to drive a point that may not be productive to the group; the times when he is letting the group go too far in a certain direction; the times when his own personality may be getting in the way of the group process. In addition, by actually having the counselor candidate participate in an ongoing group experience, the learning can be made more living so that it is not simply a supervisory teaching process, but also an experiencing one for the counselor. He can begin to get a much better feel for his own way of doing things because he gets, as with any group process, a feedback from his own peers. He can't ignore that kind of peer evidence when he gets it.

Cohn: That is so important. I think that many group counselors fail in group counseling because they don't say what they mean to say to a group; we don't really say what we feel like saying. In a group we try to couch it in such a way that it will come across gently and sometimes we don't get it across at all. In a group experience your peers would be blunt and say to you, "Now what are you really saying?" You learn to be concise, right to the point. I think nothing kills a group more than to have a counselor -- this happens more commonly with women counselors than men -- belabor a point. The kids are sitting there saying, "Let's go on to something else." I don't know how you teach ways of saying things briefly. These are learned. I find that in four or five words I can start something between two kids instead of taking what one said and re-hashing it . I sit and listen to counselors working in groups and I get so frustrated that if I were a kid I'd walk out. He'd be saying, "You're treading on a very sensitive area; you are belaboring me with it and not saying anything." Maybe the peer group experience would be the best way to handle this with counselors.

Matteson: When would such an experience come?

Cohn: I wish that would come near the end of their training. They should take their course work, then go into the group experience. Maybe even at the same time, they should join a group of their own.

Zimpfer: I am wrestling with that, Ben. My position over the years has been to treat things deductively, to start out with the framework, the theory, and then move into the practice. The farther along I go I'm not really sure whether that's the best procedure for all the students I deal with. It happens to work well for me, but I wonder whether inductive learning of what's going on and getting a feel for it, and then putting a framework on it doesn't work far better for some. I think I would run the group experience and the formal classes simultaneously.

Cohn: I find that when students can talk about what they're going to be doing in a group and then go into the group and do it, it's a lot more meaningful. They get in a group and they start using some techniques and they can see the effect. At least they know what's happening to them. I'm not so sure, either, which comes first, but it is a sensitive kind of process. I don't think just one approach by book learning and then being involved in a group for 5 or 6 weeks is enough. I don't think the practicum situation is good the way it is often set up now. You use Saturday for two or three hours and then work with the group; and someone listens to your tapes. I think that is bad because the group process requires attention to much more stuff that never gets on tape. There's a lot of nonverbal stuff that we respond to. And then there are clues and cliche statements we ought to learn. Now that again may rub some people the wrong way, but I believe there are cliche ways of saying things. "Do you feel so-and-so?" -- most of us can accept that one; in clarification it sounds like, "What you guys are saying is so-and-so." It's good for a young counselor to know he can always fall back on that when he needs it. I always fall back on silence when I don't know what to say.

Zimpfer: Or when you wish the other guys would say something.

Cohn: Or save me in some way, yes.

Boyd: As I review what we have done today I am not sure that a person who has never done group counseling, and has not had particular preparation in it will receive direct guidelines from our conference. We haven't particularly agreed on any significant points. In a way it's a sharing of points of view which I think will be most valuable to a person who has some background in this already. We haven't dealt with one of the most basic issues. For example, why use groups?

Cohn: It's obvious. It's so obvious. It's the best way of approaching kids.

Zimpfer: In response to your question about getting at the kinds of things that would be important, I would say this: if our intent has been to stimulate, I think probably we may have succeeded rather than providing definitive answers.

Cohn: Dave, I know you and I agree on about 90 percent of the things we are doing, maybe even more than that. I don't know of any piece of literature that has appeared that really covers the group counseling process from the school counselor's point of view. In other words, you and I are agreeing on the ways of approaching the group counseling program in the school. But the inexperienced reader may not see what we're doing. What scares me is that we have not established a single point of view, or made our several points of view so clear and so definite that the average person going into group counseling will understand. As a result, he may take part of yours and part of mine and come up with a process that won't work. That is the difficulty I see with reading so much of the group counseling literature. Take five books to read, and with five people trying to do the same process, each one is different. A counselor does exactly what he felt like doing originally because he can find a defense for part of it in book A, part in book B, and he ends up with a process that may not work.

Zimpfer: Here is another concern: Have we scared those that haven't tried group counseling? If an inexperienced group counselor sat down and listened to this tape, would he say, "Boy, I'll never reach that stage. That's too complicated. I can't possibly do that.", and then quit?

Cohn: I think Dave made the most important statement as far as that is concerned. That is, a guy needs experience. One of the best ways to start group counseling is simply to try it. Have your colleagues help you criticize it. We learned by our mistakes and that may still be the best way to do it.

PART II

DISCUSSION

Boyd: Now we are going to open this up to questions.

Questioner: I would like to go back to your description of the way you structured the group situation, and the procedures you went through in orienting the administration, the teachers, the parents. The remark was made two or three times that this seems to be quite successful. How do you measure success in this? How would you know if it was not successful?

ORIENTATION OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Cohn: We measured success by the kind of support we got from the parents, teachers, and the administration. The things we measured it against were those schools and those times we did not do that: (1) the kinds of questions that were asked, (2) the distance of teachers walking down the hall, (3) whether they asked about a kid, or did not ask about a kid. When we went through the orientation process the teachers would feel free to come up and ask us, "How's Johnny doing?" "Fine -- a much closer relationship." Parents who would contact us at the last meeting were extremely involved; and of course, they would say, "Group counseling is great. We want to continue it. We are going to have it next year. Boy, my kid did this as a result of what happened there." The reactions may not be directly related to group counseling, but the overall attitude was supportive as opposed to almost a lack of comment when we didn't work with groups. With our faculty-wide orientation, all the 7th grade teachers knew we were doing group counseling. They were all wondering about it. Many more parents were involved, too.

Questioner: Still, there were many school systems where you did not go through this orientation procedure.

Cohn: In many schools, if we think the program is part of the regular program, we send parents a letter stating: "Your child has been selected to take part in group counseling and if you have any questions give us a call." We get maybe one or two calls. That's usually a very large system where this kind of a program is lost in the many other programs the school is offering. In the smaller system it works great to have the parents involved. They really like it.

Questioner: Do you think, offhand, that group counseling is as effective - more effective - than individual counseling? Is it used in support of individual counseling? Where does it fit in the total guidance picture?

RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF GROUP COUNSELING

Cohn: I feel group counseling is better than individual counseling.

Questioner: Is this because you feel more comfortable with it?

Cohn: No, I think because it is a more natural setting. Kids do operate in groups. They don't want to operate as individuals. This is their whole life, especially from the 7th grade on up. I think you can cover almost everything in group counseling that you can in individual counseling. I can't say that all problems can be handled in group counseling because there are some problems that need individual counseling or require referral. But in general, I would much rather have my counselors involved in a group process, group guidance and group counseling. I think it is more effective too, because a counselor can see more students.

ADVANTAGES OF GROUP COUNSELING

Questioner: Would it be safe to assume from that statement that perhaps we are moving away from the expectation that individual counseling is the heart of the guidance program? Could we be changing this somewhat?

Cohn: If I had a program in school I'd certainly change it. The group process would be the heart of the program. Every counselor would have at least one group guidance course a day -- five a week, and at least two group counseling sessions a day. That's three groups total per day. The rest of the day he could see individual kids and do whatever other work he would have to do. I think one would be able to do almost all the work that way. In 5 days of that one would be covering almost 250 kids a semester and every kid would have some involvement with the counselor. Besides, the teachers would feel good about it.

Questioner: Barney, how do you feel about this in terms of your program?

Matteson: I agree with Ben wholeheartedly on this. I worked effectively with 295 students in group counseling through the course of last year.

I would like to add a point that has not been mentioned so far. There is counseling going on in a group even though you are not doing it. One student can say something directly to another member of the group and be more effective than the counselor. One member, for example, can say, "Look, you've been trying to be a big shot for too long; why don't you grow up?" A counselor won't say it that way. He won't, as Ben said earlier, say what he wants to say.

Cohn: And if he did, it wouldn't be listened to anyway. You're in a different world, you're an adult.

Matteson: This added influence of peers is far more effective than a one-to-one relationship can ever be; and it is a living situation. You live in groups, you never live by yourself.

IMPORTANCE OF PEERS IN THE GROUP COUNSELING PROCESS

Schmidt: I think this is particularly true in the elementary schools where you have a self-contained classroom situation. The youngster is in this one group and the teacher is 90 percent of his day. The child is not able to get out and move as he would in the junior high or senior high, so he must handle himself in a continuing group situation most of the time. Therefore,

ONE CAUTION IN THE USE OF GROUP COUNSELING

I feel that group counseling is certainly an excellent tool in the elementary schools. The biggest caution is to be alert to those elementary youngsters who can't handle the interactive group situation.

Zimpfer: I'd like to place the question you asked about the relative effectiveness of group counseling in the larger context of counselor role. For many years, especially since the development of a professional guidance organization at the national level, counselors have been striving for some kind of separateness. It has been a kind of identity search as a unique group called guidance counselors. The identity search caused counselors to try to figure out ways to be different from teachers and administrators, to be other than disciplinarians. They become very attracted to models of individual psycho-therapy at the same time. Guidance wound up closing itself into the isolation of a small office practicing near psychotherapy, and trying to do everything behind this screen. Confidentiality became almost a fetish. I think the emergence of group counseling, and the realization that some of today's most important issues are social and interactional issues is a critical turning point for guidance. Counselors are beginning to say, "How can I interact with the environment of the school again, with teachers, administrators, and the parents? How can I relate to kids in their normal environment, the peer group?" This places group counseling in a much more advantageous position than ever before. It prompts us to move into the parent groups, teacher groups, and student groups for these special purposes focusing on the interaction and feedback qualities that groups have to offer. Groups are unsurpassed in this.

Schmidt: I think you have put your finger on something here. It's a case of commitment and involvement with more of the school setting -- the total school setting. Relationships cannot be, as you said, just behind closed doors in a one-to-one situation.

Cohn: Counseling gets back to being an educational technique instead of a therapy technique.

Questioner: I would like to project this a step further, if I may. Many schools have appointed specialists such as vocational guidance experts and college counselors. Would it be possible for a school district to have written in its basic policy a statement about group counseling? Then group counseling specialists would be employed to aid people in structured situations in groups. Is this a next step?

COUNSELOR SPECIAL-IZATION

Zimpfer: You are talking about specializations within counseling and guidance.

Schmidt: Our school district is going to try precisely these kinds of specialization next year on the secondary level. As I understand it, there will be one person who will work entirely with groups; another counselor who will be directed toward the college-bound student, and then there will be a vocational person. This is something that is at the drawing board stage right now.

Cohn: We have the same kind of a program developing in Northern Westchester without anybody meaning to have it develop that way.

I believe that some persons can best serve as college counselors, and perhaps should limit their services to that. There are also people in the vocational area who could profitably limit their services to that. I can think also of some people I wouldn't want to do any group counseling for me. If I could start with a new program and hand pick my people, I would pick well trained people who can do everything -- college placement, vocational counseling, as well as group counseling, and anything else they have to do. But that's not the way it is. One comes into a school which already has a staff. Each person is encouraged to use his particular strengths. However, my preferred approach would be to have a team teaching approach to guidance. The kids would not be assigned to a counselor. The counselor would have a certain number of students which he would be responsible for administratively; but any kid coming into the office for counseling and guidance would choose his own counselor. He would go to the secretary, find a period that's open, and see a counselor who's available. The kid could come back and say he wanted to see the same counselor again, or he could change counselors. The records would be kept in a bank of files and the counselors would be free people. After a year or two we would find out whom the kids ask for the most and fire the rest. This would be using the kids' preferences as one kind of feedback. We couldn't quite go that far, but the point is that some kids should not be tied down to the same person for 3 or 4 years. There ought to be some flexibility. The only other realistic answer I know is to have more inservice training: teach the counselors to do more than they are doing, and force them to get involved. Get the best you can from them. I'd be a poor college counselor and I'd do a lousy job, but it would be part of my job if I worked in a school.

Matteson: Ben, I disagree when you say you would permit the student to come in and pick any counselor he wanted. There are special benefits from compulsory group counseling, especially if started on the 7th grade level: once the student has gone through your group counseling program -- 10 or 15 sessions, we'll say -- the following year as an 8th grade student he is more willing to come in and see you on his own because the ice has been broken. It's like going to choir practice for the first time: you want to go, and you don't want to go but your friend takes you, and then you find out it's not so bad after all. It's like getting inside the wall. I feel we should schedule the kids in -- mandate that they have a certain counselor, at least for that initial interview, or for the first month. After that, they can go to anybody they want.

Cohn: You ought to ask your kids how many will go back after they have had their first contact with the counselor and see how many you have lost to the guidance program as a result of that first interview.

Matteson: It would be hard for a new counselor in the school. I'm quite sure that if the kids had their choice they would come to the counselors who have been there a number of years rather than to the new counselor. The new counselor really wouldn't have a chance that first semester. He might get one or two counselees a day and even then he might

bank strictly on administrative referrals or faculty referrals. I think he would have a great deal of free time that first semester.

Schmidt: Barney, this might be a difficulty for a new counselor. But if he can cut the mustard and has the ability to identify with the kids, they will receive him as a person who is willing to become involved and help them. I think the school grapevine works fast; he wouldn't be long without counselees. One might find that some of the experienced counselors would wind up with empty offices, if kids had the choice not to go.

Questioner: I'd like to ask a question related to the morning discussion on how to select a group. I was in a session on Long Island last week where the recommendation was that groups be composed at random, that there be no selection criteria. But much of the literature says that there should be some homogeneous selection. What is your opinion? Can the views be reconciled?

ESTABLISHING GROUPS -- COMPOSITION OF GROUPS

Zimpfer: Well, answers to the question of group composition are varied and complex. I look at it in terms of some broad operating principles. Every group will eventually have to come to the point of being homogeneous on something. It has to have some kind of a process it agrees on, and some kind of a general content, or general purpose that it's willing to subscribe to. I am not saying that a group is set up like a problem solving meeting, where everybody has to arrive at some kind of a common agreement at the end as to exactly what the decision is that should fit everybody, but our knowledge of group dynamics suggests that group cohesiveness depends, at least partly, on the willingness of every group member to do something in common as part of the group. In the early literature and practice in group counseling people tried to contrive homogeneous groups by assembling youngsters who had the same concern or problem. I am not sure that this pays off unless the counselor and the group both are willing to adhere to that original reason for forming the group. This is perhaps best illustrated in behavioral counseling research, which has focused on cases like the shy student, the one who needed to gather information, or the one who had trouble making decisions. I would contend that you can construct the group to help specific kinds of cases, as well as to get certain kinds of role behavior represented in the group. You will want to plan on including members who can stimulate and initiate, others who can support, and so on. A group needs a balance of roles.

Questioner: That means screening and preselection?

SCREENING GROUP MEMBERS

Zimpfer: Yes, if I am setting up the group to achieve specific goals like helping uncooperative kids to be more cooperative or helping shy kids to be less shy. On the other hand, if I'm willing to subscribe to a group procedure as a kind of broad exploration, let's say for 6th or 7th graders, in which virtually any counseling goal is possible, depending on the movement of the group, I can take any 10 people out of a given class and proceed with them on that basis, and try to work with whatever forms itself within the group.

Cohn: In group selection I think one thing we have to take into consideration is whether we want a mixed-sex group or all boys or all girls. We work with these combinations. The only difference is the vehicle we use. Boys talk about boy-type things and girls about girl-type things, and when the two are mixed they pick a neutral kind of topic. But regardless of the vehicle, the objectives relate to the self-concept; all I'm concerned about is anything that gives them an opportunity to talk about themselves.

Zimpfer: There are special factors regarding group selection in the elementary school situation. We know that in the early grades there is a considerable difference in growth toward social maturity and emotional maturity between boys and girls; in addition, the closer they approach the junior high age the greater the divergence within the sexes themselves. It is very likely in elementary school counseling that we will want to pay particular attention to the maturity level of the youngsters in our selection process, so that we don't include in a single group, too broad a range of ability to cope with group situations. All the members need to be able to cope with the attitudes and expressions of feeling of the most mature and experienced member. In elementary counseling we can unwittingly create a situation in which some kids are over their depth.

Cohn: I think the maturity level which Dave is talking about is one of the things that we have to be very careful with.

Zimpfer: In order to capitalize on the preferences of youngsters in elementary school I might be inclined to move toward segregated sex groups at the elementary level. Kids of age 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 buddy around with kids of their own sex -- the gang concept -- rather than with the opposite sex. In comprising groups I ought to take that into acconnt and use it rather than fight it by setting up mixed groups. If I'm particularly interested in focusing on the sharing of viewpoints on boy-girl issues in later grades, then there is value in having boys and girls together. Selection criteria are conditioned by my purpose.

Schmidt: Dave, this is very true. I find this to exist expecially with 4th, 5th and 6th graders. When I started I did have mixed sexes in the 4th grade in particular. There was a complete inability to get anything done with the boys and girls together in a group.

Cohn: Yet in the 8th grade and up you might want the sexes together because their problems are interpersonal, intersex concerns.

Another thing which strikes me as being very important is this - when you are setting up a group don't put any additional or unnecessary problems in your way. If you are working with the 7th grade and you don't know about the effect of having girls in the group, don't have them in the group; have only boys. In the 8th grade the boy and girl problem may be pretty obvious around school; if you don't want to have to deal with that kind of a problem because you are going to work with something else, then don't combine your sexes for that group.

I like to have unusual kinds of groups just to find out about groups. My secondary goal is to produce success. What I'm doing is playing around with different things to see what happens. That's my role; I can do this. The counselor in a school should not do this. He ought to take the things that have been tried and work with them.

Questioner: Let's see, there's sex and there's age. What else in the selection process would be important in setting up a group?

Schmidt: Dave talked about maturity and taking the purposes into account. You want to consider that too.

Matteson: I found family background made a difference. If Johnny Smith's father doesn't come home five nights a week because he's an alcoholic or something, it is hard for some kids to understand this and to deal with it. It created a problem in one group of mine. Perhaps the family background can't be too divergent.

Zimpfer: If your specific intent is to get these kids to look at family issues, and the relationships they have with their parents, and how it colors all of their work in school, and you want that to be done by the group members sharing their experiences and reactions, then you will want your group to be comprised of youngsters who come from a variety of family backgrounds. Again, it depends on your purposes. I am assuming that your objective in this case is to promote the sharing of different viewpoints on family.

Questioner: Ben, you said this morning that you wanted to know at all times the direction that your group was going; that you had specific goals for it.

Cohn: I feel comfortable with this.

Questioner: What are some of these goals that you would set up for a group? Would they be in terms of an individual session of this group or for the 10 or 12 sessions?

SETTING OF GOALS

Cohn: You will remember that a basic premise of the self-concept approach is that we all have a self-concept that's caused by the feedback we get from the very important people in our lives: parents, teachers, siblings, and peers. If we accept that, then our counseling process is based on that and we have three intermediate goals for our process. First of all, while the kids can talk about anything they'd like, my job is to get them to see their self-concept. When I think that most of them can talk about how they feel about themselves ("Well, I'm not sure I can do any better." "I'm not so sure I'm as good as people think I am."), then my question to the individual, but through the group is, "Why? What are some of the things that have happened to you? What are your experiences that make you feel this way?"

When the kids can reach the point where they say, "Well, every time I do something I get criticized," or "Every time I think I'm doing okay someone wants me to do better," I challenge them: "Okay, what can you do

about it? How are you going to handle it?" This is over a period of 12 sessions. Three or four kids may be ready to move into step 2, but others may not yet; so it needs juggling. But by the end I'm hoping that I can get all these kids to the point where we are now talking about specific things they can do for themselves. This will give them different kinds of experiences to support a better self-concept. All my actions in a group are aimed toward identifying the self-concept, clarifying the self-concept, and moving on to some of the reasons why we feel as we do.

Questioner: Whether you use a particular technique, for example, being silent, or speaking at a certain time, it would be geared back to one of these three basic ideas?

BASIC AREAS

Cohn: Yes, but I do this near the end of the series.

Questioner: Then the selection would really not make that much difference?

Cohn: It depends, I think, on what Dave said. Generally, if I were working with typical adolescents who were passing in school but not as well as they could, selection would not make a difference. But if I were working with underachievers and some of these were acting-out-achievers, I would be a little more careful about my selection. I'd be a little bit sharper on how I was dealing with them. If I had a pool of 20 kids to pick from, then I might want to pick a couple of fairly bright kids, a couple of average kids, one guy who is acting out, and some other guys to give support. That way I know ahead of time what I have to work with. But even then I'm not so sure it's going to work out, for the strongest guy I pick may be made of glass and this guy over here knows exactly how to break him and knocks the whole thing off. I lean toward not worrying about selection.

Questioner: It does seem then, you do have some selection.

Cohn: It depends on what I'm trying to do with the kids. If they have no specific topic in mind, just better understanding, they can do the choosing of members.

Questioner: I am trying to think of the differences in approach between the elementary and the secondary. Is there any more you can say about that?

DIFFERENCES IN TECHNIQUES BY GRADE LEVEL

Schmidt: In the elementary situation I think you have to involve the classroom teacher a great deal more than you would in a secondary school. There is need for communication between the counselor and the teacher as to how this youngster is functioning in a classroom. We need to know if there are any noticeable changes that she can see.

Cohn: I had an interesting result from counseling with a 5th grade group that I will never forget. We had a good relationship going in a group where there were about 10 kids. One day I thought I'd try out something. I walked in and I said, "What would happen if you tried next week to all make straight A's; how many of you could make straight A's?"

They said they probably could make some. I said, "I think it would be nice if you tried. Next week we'll talk about it." These kids were all down near the bottom of their class. It was astonishing: they came in with a lot of A's -- not all A's but a lot of A's. The teacher was surprised. This would not have sustained itself, I am sure, but it points up the fact that if one has a good relationship, the counselor takes a very important role with elementary school kids. He is a very important person to these kids. He is more like a father figure to them. If he handles it properly he can get them to do almost anything.

Questioner: The change in self-concept that happened in that week might be very important.

Cohn: I didn't follow up on it.

Zimpfer: In elementary counseling, it is important to remember that the youngsters haven't arrived at the ability to abstract which we often expect to have in our secondary school and college level counseling. Elementary youngsters probably are not able to sustain an intensive discussion which is introspective; which focuses on something other than concrete material. The counselor becomes something other than merely a facilitator. Ben puts it in terms of a counselor becoming a father figure or a mother figure. I think this is very likely to be the case. The counselor at the elementary level needs to be working with the total environment of the youngster, which means contact with parents and contact with the teachers in order to facilitate the process. Continuance beyond the counseling sessions is also important because I am not sure you are going to get that much out of an early elementary counseling session all by itself. I feel this is also true in secondary counseling. We are missing the boat by not providing a follow through to counseling activities. We spend a lot of time worrying about whether the counselee is saying the right things during secondary counseling but do not concern ourselves sufficiently with the follow through activities which provide the payoff.

Cohn: Our school's experience is that the second year of group counseling is 100 percent better. When we come back the second year and ask last year's counselees if they'd like to be in group counseling again, they volunteer readily for the second year. In the very first session they pick up almost where they left off the year before. You are 10 feet tall when you have a group like that. They already know the gimmicks. They have done their testing. They know the techniques to use and now they are really ready to talk about themselves. You could also do it by starting a group with 12 weekly sessions early in the year, skip the middle 12 weeks, and bring them back in the last 12. When they come back they are better prepared to get down to business.

Elementary school kids are very frank and straight to the point: "How do you get along at home?" "I wish my sister were dead." What does the counselor do with that? With a junior high school kid you can work with it for a while because he doesn't tell you this right away, but small kids come right out and say it. These kids haven't built up defense systems yet. They haven't defended themselves against their feelings and their feelings spurt out. What is needed in elementary guidance, as far

Questioner: Then you do feel for instance that when the youngsters have reached a certain level you can bring an outsider in? I have heard counselors say, "I can't have an outsider in; it won't be the same."

EFFECTS OF THE PRESENCE OF A VISITOR

Cohn: I have learned from these kids that when I reach the point in counseling where they're a cohesive group, I can stand on my head all session and it won't make a bit of difference. Kids are extremely flexible. If there's a disruption, the level of the session will drop down but will soon be back up. I want to tell about an experience we had while counseling in the teachers' lounge.

A teacher came in and started talking to me in the middle of our group while these kids were talking about something pretty important. The kid who was speaking just shut off what he was talking about; he came right back up to the surface and talked about something until she left. Then another teacher came in while a boy was talking. The child looked up at the teacher and said, "That sonofabitch, bastard," -- a whole lot of curse words. (The teacher was shocked at that and ran out in a hurry.) Then the boy came right back to what he was talking about when the teacher interrupted. They handled this beautifully.

Questioner: If I were a teacher in that situation and I walked in and heard this kind of language, I wouldn't think it was being handled very beautifully.

Cohn: The teacher was a relatively new teacher. The other teachers knew they were not to come in when I was in there. This one obviously didn't know that the door was not supposed to be opened. I'm sure she went to some other teacher and commented about the incident, but it must have been taken care of because I never heard a word about it.

Schmidt: I have had a principal come in and join a 6th grade group after they had reached the point where they could handle the visitation. He sat back a few feet. The kids went on, perhaps a little more superficially than when he first came in, but they got involved again shortly. Certainly this is a very threatening thing to do to elementary school children, but they can handle it.

Zimpfer: Studies have been done for at least 20 years on the question of whether the presence of an observer in the group makes any difference on the group's interaction. There is evidence on the one side that says, yes, it does make a difference; and we have evidence on the other side that says, no, it doesn't make any difference. My own experience in conducting demonstration groups before student counselors is that a demonstration group is not particularly different from a closed group.

GROUP OBSERVERS

Cohn: Right, even an audience doesn't faze them. Kids today forget quickly. The microphone is nothing to these kids. If you do a good job with them and get them involved, the building could be falling down next door and they don't get up and leave.

as I am concerned, is more reeducation or more manipulation of the environment; more didactic kinds of things, maybe feeding the teacher so that she can feed it to the kid; or feeding it to the parents so that they can feed it to the kid. You know things the kid should do: "Then next time your brother hits you, don't hit him back. Go to your parents and say 'Johnny hit me.' Maybe your brother is sucking you in. He's hitting you so you will hit him back so he can have you punished." You don't say this to the kids directly, though. You have the group work on this until someone says it; but you are almost teaching him ways to combat some of the problems that he is aware of but hasn't quite put into words yet.

Zimpfer: So you are saying, Ben, the counselor assumes a considerably larger degree of responsibility at the elementary level than he would at the secondary level?

Cohn: Yes.

Zimpfer: The big need then becomes the counselor's own awareness of the kinds of mechanisms he adds to kids' repertories, and whether the counselor is just using his own pet ways of handling problems. The counselor's self-insights become even more critical at the elementary level.

Matteson: I think the older the group is the more time the counselor has to spend in working on the defenses these kids have built up. In the elementary grades, as Ben says, it is more didactic. I don't think you can come up with a magic number of 12 sessions, because you might spend a great deal of time with a high school senior group just working on the defenses that they have established before you can get them to do any investigating of their concepts.

JUSTIFICATION OF GROUP COUNSELING

Questioner: I have a question. Assume that I'm a teacher, and I am not sure what you fellows are doing in your group counseling; I am not sure how this is contributing to the overall development of the children. I don't see any change in my class, and I consider this just another gimmick somebody else has picked up and brought along. How can you justify group counseling in light of today's austerity budgeting?

Cohn: I would invite you in. I would wait until the group had had 8 or 10 sessions, then I would have you come sit in. I would get the kids ready the week before: "Next week Mrs. Brown is going to come in and sit with us." I won't change anything; I'll just show her what we do here. The communication and the openness of the kids should prove that it's a valuable process.

Questioner: Can I assume that unless we bring teachers along with us every step of the way, and unless we have a good channel of communication that will aid them in understanding what we are trying to do, we've got troubles?

Cohn: You are asking an obvious question.

Questioner: This same question about the worth of group counseling was asked at a meeting I attended last week. The counselors replied that their administrators are in sensitivity workshops on the weekend, the teachers are in workshops, and everybody accepts this. Other counselors don't have the same reception for their group work

Cohn: On paper, group counseling sounds great. Theoretically and philosophically it's a beautiful technique if you do what you say you're going to do: allow kids to communicate, teach them communicating skills; if they talk about themselves and better understand themselves, there is a lot of counseling going on.

CHANGE AS A CRITERION FOR EFFECTIVENESS OF GROUP COUNSELING

Questioner: Administrators ask, "Is he a better achiever?" They want something they can point to and say the students are going to achieve better and therefore the parents will pay for it. This is the hangup which I think we have to deal with.

Matteson: The administrator also gets asked, "How many times has my son seen the counselor?" If your son or daughter has been in to see the counselor 12 times in counseling sessions, and I, as a counselor, can say, "I have seen your son and I know him by his first name," this never has to sell itself. The kids do the selling.

Cohn: If an administrator asked me if counseling was going to make my kid a better achiever my answer would be, "I'm not sure. Theoretically, it should. When he understands himself better, when he feels more at ease with himself, and can deal with his friends and parents and teachers, he'll do a better job of studying and learn more." There will be less need for him to daydream. But I can't guarantee this for every kid. He can't guarantee to me that every kid going through the school system is going to be an achiever either.

GUIDELINES FOR GROUP SIZE

Questioner: What are some guidelines you might set up for group size? Does size vary by age, grade level, or type of problem?

Cohn: I find that most counselors do the wrong thing by starting with too small a group. They think that if they have four kids they can control it; but with four kids they don't have the interaction. They are always pushed to get something started. I think 8 normal kids are an ideal setting. With emotionally disturbed or acting-out kids you might want only 5 because the activity is all over the place. For a junior high school group, I love 8. I very seldom go to 10 because with 10 some kids get away from you.

Zimpfer: If you are using group counseling with the idea of promoting lots of interaction, and you start out with the assumption that everybody is supposed to talk, you reach a saturation point on the number of members. If your sessions are an hour long and you have 12 kids in the group, as many counselors do, you have 5 minutes of effective talking time divided per counselee. As a matter of fact, if you do a second-by-second count you wind up with more silence than talking in group sessions, so actually the effective talking time is around 2 or 2½ minutes each.

If I am looking for interaction among the youngsters this is a big argument for holding the size of the group down to something like 10 or less. At the lower end I find it a bit harder to pinpoint exactly how small a group can go. I do accept Ben's point that too small a number may stifle the group. If you are looking for a variety of resources, a variety of roles, a variety of points of view, you must have numbers in order to do it. By the same token, I think that for elementary school youngsters a somewhat smaller group may be of advantage. With this age group you get less ability to concentrate on a particular topic; you are going to find considerably more going off on tangents and so much more quickly; and there is the possibility of a wider range of maturity levels among the kids than you thought about when you originally structured the group. There's sense, according to this line of thinking, for a somewhat smaller group at the elementary level.

Schmidt: I think this is very true. You also get more physical movement during the sessions and a good deal of nonverbal communication is carried on. It is very difficult to keep track of the nonverbal communication if you have too many. I find 5 or 6 members are about right for me.

Cohn: If you have one quiet kid in a group of 4, you've got 25 percent of the group gone. I began experimenting with large group counseling of 25 kids in a class, but I found that I ended up with about three different groups. One day I got very angry with them and said, "Look, we're dealing with something very important here and you people are talking about something else." They said, "No we're not; we're talking about the same thing they are talking about." They had their own subgroups going. So, they do break up into smaller groups and that is why I think they should be small, 8 to 10.

Zimpfer: You know what Stan Caplan says every time we raise this question? Stan says, "Group size is a function of you -- whatever you feel you can handle."

Questioner: You do think that verbal participation is important on the part of every kid most of the time; that if a kid just sits there he's not getting anything out of it?

Zimpfer: I didn't say that.

Questioner: No, but I got that from what you've said here. You work for verbal participation, and if you have a group too large or too small to participate they are getting nothing out of it.

Zimpfer: If we look at recent research on learning styles and other concepts about how kids effectively pick up things that are important to them, we know there are some kids who can learn very effectively by sitting and listening. But for us to say handily that therefore any kid can be quiet in a group, doesn't really make any sense. It's just a self-justifying way of approaching things. If I'm sure that a particular youngster is going to profit vicariously, I guess I'm perfectly willing, if the group is willing, to let him be silent. By and large, though, a

group won't let a kid be silent for long. Anywhere between the middle of the first session and the third or fourth session somebody is going to come around with, "Why the heck don't you say something?"

Questioner: Make the assumption that a counselor has been successful with individual counseling; what are the main techniques he ought to feel moderately comfortable in dealing with before he should begin group counseling?

BASIC COUNSELING TECHNIQUES FOR THE BEGINNING GROUP COUNSELOR

Cohn: You use the term "techniques," so I think you are talking about specific techniques the counselor would use, the things he uses in keeping the session going, and making a change. My answer would be six: the reflection of feeling, reflection of content, support, clarification, questioning, and probing. If he has those, the group will move.

Questioner: What is the difference between questioning and probing?

QUESTIONING VS. PROBING

Cohn: Questioning is asking objective type questions, and probing is subjective type questions. These techniques are basic. In addition to these, the counselor will develop other techniques like the use of extremes, or the "behind the kid's back" technique. In that one, a kid turns out of a group and the group talks about him as if he weren't there.

One technique I have just discovered that I think is great is, "I don't understand what you're saying." "Even though I did understand what you were saying I want you to say it again and get rid of the garbage so that the group can understand what you're saying." I may say even a third time, "Gee, I think I know what you're saying but say it one more time for us." In this way, the child comes right to the point and the group will respond to that. These are other techniques that he will learn as he goes along. The six basic ones were developed in individual counseling but work equally well in group counseling. If he is a good individual counselor, he should already know these.

Questioner: There are two things bothering me now. Everyone has mentioned change. We get a group and we're going to "change" it. I would like to understand why they have to change. Secondly, if group counseling seems to be so effective maybe a counselor can work with as many as 500 kids. His case load can be increased.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHANGE IN THE GROUP MEMBERS

Cohn: I had 20 groups a week one year. Four groups a day, 5 days a week. I met with them continuously for the year. At 8 per group that was 160 kids. In the course of the year, I could have broken it up into two semesters and had 320.

Matteson: Don't think it's a matter of expediency to meet kids in groups. It just doesn't work out, because once that kid gets into your office and realizes that you're not a teacher and you're not an administrator, chances are he'll come back when he has a problem. If he never was engaged in group counseling he might not come back. Group counseling really increases

your individual counseling load. Instead of increasing the load of the counselor, it should be decreased if he goes into group counseling.

Cohn: I think 300 or 350 to a counselor is a fine case load. You can work very effectively with that many kids. I don't think you'd stand a chance of having a counselor in a school with a smaller case load. I wouldn't hesitate to have 500 kids in my case load. I'd just do more group counseling. I would have them in groups of 20 or 25. I would have my times put into the master schedule, and use the schedule for programs like all the other subjects for one period or two periods a day.

Questioner: You almost have to do that if you are going to have a continuous program of group counseling?

Cohn: Group counseling was actually scheduled in one of the schools that I worked in.

The more important question was the first one you asked about why we have to change these kids. Why do we have to change them? I guess we don't have to change them at all.

Matteson: And some of the pupils don't change.

Questioner: But you have already made a judgment that change should take place.

CHANGING ATTITUDES

Cohn: Change in attitude. Change in looking at themselves. I would say that in most groups the people sitting around do have relatively poor self-concepts. We compensate for it. We learn to cope with it. I would think all adolescents have a really confused self-concept. They are striving to find out, to grab hold of a handle on who they are. Counseling helps them. The sooner they get over it the sooner they can get down to actually making some plans for their lives.

Zimpfer: It becomes a part of a process that must start early.

Cohn: I would hope that it would start early.

Matteson: The earlier self-concept formation starts, the easier it is to work with. If we don't get it sometime in the school process, we don't get it at all.

Questioner: How early do you think counseling should start?

WHERE SHOULD GROUP COUNSELING BEGIN?

Matteson: I say at the elementary school level, where the child's defenses are less solidly built.

Cohn: My feeling is that group counseling is a verbal-type technique, and so the group must be old enough to verbalize some of their feelings. I would say begin around 4th grade.

Schmidt: I am working from 4th grade up. I do not work with first,

second, and third grades. If you counsel in the lower grades you have to use extra materials like play things and telephones. You cannot expect the verbal interaction that you would look for in an older group situation.

Questioner: Is it possible to introduce a certain amount of training in the primary grades, perhaps even kindergarten, in ways of verbalizing inner feelings? I have seen some outstanding things in training children to think about feelings. For example, give each child a piece of candy, ask him to taste it and eat it, and then express how it felt, how it tasted. This is getting him to realize what inner sensation is, and putting that into verbalization. This takes time but that group, in its second year, knows how to express more readily some of these internal feelings of self. It is then possible to bring out other feelings that might have been too difficult to conceptualize if they hadn't had this training. Have any of you done any work along this line?

INTRODUCTION OF TRAINING EARLY

Cohn: One district is working on an elementary project with first, second, and third grade kids. I would call it group activity counseling, since they are involved in activities that they then talk about. I think Axline's work with play therapy would be something that we ought to look at more seriously for the lower age level. She attempts to get children to observe and describe their own behavior or that of others. If one youngster hits another, she would ask, "Let's talk about it." "How did it feel?" and so on. But I have not worked on that level myself.

TRAINING FOR EXPRESSING INNER FEELINGS

Questioner: This sounds like a readiness program, a beginning program for the counselee to become more active in the group. My opinion is that children should become aware of feelings much sooner than they do and then know how to handle them. I don't think we're touching on this kind of training at all. We live in a verbal world. We try to bring that world to children and wonder why we have to remove so many of the stumbling blocks in 4th, 5th and 6th grades.

READINESS FOR GROUP PARTICIPATION

SENSITIZING CHILDREN TO THEIR FEELINGS

Schmidt: When you're dealing with very young children you have to use candy, puppets, telephones; concrete things, things they can touch and feel, and then promote as much verbalization from this as possible.

Questioner: Not verbalization for the sake of verbalization. I'm talking about getting at a training period to bring out inner feelings.

Schmidt: One can use a whole puppet family -- mother, father, son, and daughter. The youngsters can act out family situations in role playing. This is used in what we call Transitional Adjustment Class. The kids have an opportunity to hide themselves but talk through the puppets. Or the counselors use music. These things can lead to situations where the kids do have to express feelings.

USE OF PUPPETS

TRANSITIONAL ADJUSTMENT CLASS

Questioner: Do you ever set up a family type situation in counseling? For example, a male and female counselor with 8 children?

Cohn: My feeling about this is that it is another gimmick. If you're going to focus on family situations for the junior high school kids or upper elementary school kids, you don't need male and female counselors. The kids talk about it anyway.

On the question of verbalization that was brought up a minute ago: I agree that we should do more to sensitize kids to their feelings. But they must be able to verbalize them. Without verbalizing them, all changes that might occur have to come from the outside rather than from the inside. Even with the smaller youngster, we have to get some idea about insight started.

Questioner: Yes. And such learning gives them a chance to find their own way. If they begin to realize they have feelings, then they can find expression for them. They can take time to find the words when they are in counseling.

Cohn: But usually their vocabulary is so limited they'll come out and say, "I hate" or "I love," when really what they're saying is, "My feelings are confused. I hate her sometimes." The counselor has got to do some of this for them. To get this requires more than just observation. Axline's work is almost 100 percent observation and then changing the environment. I think one of our biggest problems in teaching kids is to talk on their level. We should not listen so much to the words but try to get what they're trying to tell us in feelings. I do think that making changes, and helping them feel and draw relationships is very hard.

Zimpfer: I think we have picked up a dimension that we really didn't intend to focus on, i.e., we are restricting the notion of group counseling to a remedial purpose. When we brought in the idea of helping youngsters in the primary grades to develop some increased sensitivity or awareness, we were contributing to some other purpose than remediating problems. This developmental function seems more appropriate for elementary counseling. How can we help kids handle the education situation better? The formal educational setting calls for verbalization, and it calls for abstraction; it calls for the manipulation of cognitive material. How can we, as elementary guidance specialists, focus on some of those things, or help teachers focus on some of them so that kids' work in grades 1, 2 and 3 isn't exclusively learning how to read, learning how to compute, and learning how to print or write? There are other aspects of the self that need to be developed. The guidance specialist can help a six or nine year old to play in terms of meeting these kinds of developmental functions. He need not concern himself exclusively with the problem-centered functions.

REMEDIAL VS. DEVELOPMENTAL FUNCTIONS OF THE COUNSELOR

Questioner: But they are facing a problem; the problem of how to deal with the school situation, and of learning the verbal means of dealing with it.

Zimpfer: When I am talking about problems, I'm talking about trying to make a wrong right; focusing on change. Do we have to change kids? My feeling is that it is our need to be omnipotent that constantly forces us to move in, to want to make kids into a certain mold or pattern. We talk quite lengthily about trying to help them become whatever it is they are able to become, and yet we keep trying to shape them into our own ideal of a positive self image.

Questioner: The change referred to here may be one of helping them to deal with problems in a new environment like the school.

THE CHANGE FUNCTION OF THE COUNSELOR IN THE SCHOOL SETTING

Zimpfer: All right. I am emphasizing a perspective view. The school environment calls for abstraction, verbalization, manipulation of cognitive material.' I will assist these youngsters to be able to verbalize, to be able to assimilate and relate cognitive concepts. I will assist them with whatever devices I can to be able to deal more effectively with the school environment. It calls for working with the teacher, with parents, and with the kids, too. I will also assist them to become more aware of themselves as inner functioning persons because this is one of my primary roles, which the teacher may in fact not do. Where I can work with the teacher I will work with the teacher. Where I have particular competencies as in counseling, I will do those myself; but where I can work with teachers in the elementary school, I will do it every chance I get.

Cohn: My idea of change is in terms of the child's concept of himself, if he needs to be changed. Many times all he needs is a reinforcement of the concept he has of himself and that's enough. But many kids need someone to help them zero in on who they are. I picture the adolescent period as like the mailboxes in a post office, a series of cubbyholes. They go through the adolescent period and the partitions begin to melt; problems become mixed with other problems. In counseling you put the partitions back up for them and they have to solve each of these individual problems. They can do it, too, if they can see each problem in itself. We help clarify the problems so that they can make a decision about them. The earlier we can do this the better.

CLARIFICATION OF THE SELF IMAGE

Questioner: In other words, in a sense you are not promoting change?

Cohn: No. Change only if they want to change. If they don't want to change that's fine.

Questioner: There's a contradiction here. Barney said that kids in group counseling learn to solve problems, but after that they will come to you for individual counseling. If we're teaching them how to solve problems, wouldn't that reduce the number of individual sessions?

Cohn: Maybe they need more practice, and they come back.

Matteson: What I am saying is that there are problems on the 7th grade level that are very serious problems to 7th graders. In a group

counseling situation they will solve some of these problems. By 8th grade they have acquired new problems. The one who has been in 7th grade group counseling may be more willing to come in and talk with you and work on the problems that he has now acquired in the 8th grade.

Questioner: But why would he need to come back to you at all if he had acquired generalized ability to solve his own problems? Even though the latter problem is different he still has general ability to solve problems.

EFFECT OF GROUP COUNSELING ON INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING

Matteson: That's what I tried to say. In other words, there are 7th grade problems that are very big. But then problems come along in the 8th grade that sometimes they're not capable of coping with, such as death of a parent. They may need supportive action. I don't expect them to become dependent, but I am saying that they will come to see you more readily after they have broken down the wall of your being a parent, or teacher, or administrator. I find my load is greatly increased after group counseling.

Questioner: People say group counseling saves time, but you are saying it does not because it increased the number of individual contacts later on. They establish a rapport with you; therefore they feel comfortable and they come back.

Matteson: I went through a group experience for 2 years and I'm quite sure I am more capable of solving my problems now, but that's at an adult level. I don't think you can take a 7th grader and teach him a better self-concept and think that he is going to be able to solve all his problems for the rest of his life just because of the self-image correction gained in counseling.

EFFECT OF GROUP COUNSELING ON PROBLEM SOLVING

Cohn: They may approach problems with more strength.

Matteson: Just the strength to come in and see you is an important thing.

Questioner: Among the things that you may have taught them is that most people tend to feel better if they are able to describe their own reactions to something that's bothering them. They already have a pretty good idea of what they should do about it, or how to do it, but they can reassure themselves if they have an opportunity to share it with somebody else. Maybe one measure of group counseling is that they are more open with more people than they were before. Parents for example, notice that there are more confidences shared by their son or daughter.

MEASURE OF EFFECTIVENESS OF GROUP COUNSELING

Matteson: I constantly get the telephone call: "I don't know what's going on over there, but my daughter sure likes drying the dishes with me. Previously there wasn't this rapport at all."

Questioner: Do you know of any school which has done group counseling long enough so that a child who began to participate in the 7th

EFFECT OF GROUP COUNSELING OVER A LONG TERM

grade, became involved for a period of 5 or 6 years, and showed some long-range results? Everyone seems to be trying it for the first time, and I'm wondering what we know about it on a long term basis.

Matteson: I have been doing group counseling for 6 years, but there isn't any continuity. The students go to another counselor in the senior high school or they move out of the district. I'm not aware of any place where the long term has been possible.

Cohn: One of the major regrets about my own experiences, and my own professional growth, is that I've moved so fast in group counseling I've not brought along the counselors even in my own area. We have almost no group counseling going on right around where I work, and yet people from other places will ask me to come as a consultant.

GROUP COUNSELING SHOULD BE VOLUNTARY

Questioner: Let me ask another question. Some of you have said that group counseling should probably be voluntary. Others seem to make an effort to include every child in this kind of thing by the time he is through junior high school. Should we consider that we have done less than our duty if we do not get them all into a group at some point, say in 1 or 2 years?

A COUNSELOR'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL CHILDREN

Cohn: I think every kid should have an opportunity to be under large group guidance. The whole class should be involved, talking about personal kinds of problems but not being personally involved. They should all have that kind of exposure. From that group there will be those who request more involvement; those volunteering should be in group counseling. I think there are too many kids going through our systems that never have the opportunity to talk openly about some of the things that are bothering them. They talk in their own small cliques, and on the corners. We've not been aware of their feelings. We have not given them an opportunity to communicate with us. These are the kids that I worry about, the ones that still feel that adults are some different kind of group that you don't relate to. There should be someone in a school that a kid can always feel free to relate to.

Questioner: The lack of this is the basis of student unrest.

Cohn: Well, I think so. Right.

THE INDIVIDUAL SHOULD DECIDE WHETHER HE PARTICIPATES

Matteson: Group counseling itself should not be mandatory but all should be exposed to it. And another thing: I think everyone should have the opportunity to get into a group counseling session but also the opportunity to withdraw if he so desires.

Questioner: Is it possible that those students who refuse to enter the group are already personally quite secure; come from secure environments; feel that their backgrounds are such that the school would never need to deal with them? Yet, there may be a great many people whose backgrounds are exactly the opposite,

who are quite aware that the school is not particularly in tune with their life situations and who therefore would never volunteer for anything that the school offered. These students may be the ones who should get in. How do you handle this when you don't know why they don't volunteer?

Cohn: I may be unusual but I can work with a group of 20 kids in a group guidance program and tell you which kids I think could benefit from the group experience. Then I could use techniques to get them to volunteer. I use a little thing like walking over and putting my hand on a shoulder and saying, "Now Mary, I know you're feeling pretty bad right now but we're going to work on this; if you'd like to, we can get together and talk about it later." Or, "Mary, you seem to be getting along pretty well with Jane; why don't the two of you come down and see me; bring along a couple of other girls and we'll sit around and talk. We can do the same as we are doing here but in a smaller group."

Questioner: Then you are saying that group counseling should be beneficial for a large portion of the student body and that you are willing to take the initiative to encourage those kids.

Cohn: Absolutely. Even in my private practice I encourage them. The parents bring the kid in and the kid says, "I'll never come. My parents are making me come but I'll never come back." I use the approach, "Okay, let's make a deal. Give me four sessions with you; at the end of the 4 sessions if you don't want to come back I'll tell your parents not to bring you back." I try it for 4 sessions, and I haven't lost anybody yet. I think that these kids are afraid until they establish the relationship. We've got to go out and find them. There are a lot of kids in school who need our help badly and we don't make the effort to go get them. Sometimes we go get them in the worst possible way: "I see you're failing everything. Come in and see me." That's a horrible approach.

Questioner: I think this has implications for counselor's assignment as well. You spoke earlier that a kid should be free to see any counselor he wants to see. Over the past 5 or 6 years we have tried to encourage the idea of an association with a given counselor over as many years as possible, depending on the school structure.

Cohn: Suppose I don't like the counselor you assign me?

Questioner: There should be flexibility for individual choice.

Cohn: I'm not going to tell you I want a new counselor. You're going to get me into a college one of these days, maybe.

Questioner: Do we lose something by not having an association over a rather long period of time?

Cohn: The association between client and counselor can be either good or bad. Who is going to make a decision that the association is bad? Is the kid going to have enough strength to tell you? No, he just doesn't bother coming back. Who decides that kid should be moved to someone else?

I have had counselors come in and say, "Johnny Jones came in to see me yesterday and he is not my counselee. What do I do? If I tell the kid's regular counselor he'd get mad at me." So the kid stays with his assigned counselor. That situation is unfortunate.

Let me comment about getting kids to volunteer. I went to one school and I was supposed to do group counseling there, but the Board said no to group counseling in that school district. The superintendent said, "You bought him for one day a week and you're going to take him for one day a week." So I went there and sat in an office with nothing to do. Then I started to interpret test results with the kids. I asked the counselor to send me kids he wanted me to see, and I began interpreting test results. They had problems; they wanted to talk about something else as well as test results. After about two months, I had my schedule full from 8:50 in the morning until 3:50 in the afternoon with no lunch break. I purposely let them fill in my lunch break so I could go back to the administration and say, "Look, these are your kids; this is the kind of help they need." The administrator suggested I take two or three at a time. Before the end of the year we had group counseling going and then they bought the BOCES service for two more years. If a counselor does a good job, children will beat down the door to get to him. There is no question in my mind about that.

Questioner: This should break down the idea that a counselor gets kids into college.

Cohn: I think a lot of college placement can be done in groups. A lot of scheduling can be done in groups. Vocational choices can be done in groups. A lot of things can be done in groups.

COLLEGE PLACEMENT THROUGH GROUP COUNSELING

Matteson: More efficiently too.

I even tried interpreting cumulative records to kids in group situations. I don't recommend that; that blew up in my face because some kids got hurt. The records did not substantiate the kids' opinions of themselves.

Questioner: Using groups as a medium for test interpretation takes the magic out of it. They're more at ease and can readily go beyond, too.

USING GROUP COUNSELING TO INTERPRET TEST RESULTS

Cohn: But, if you take more than one test at a time and try to interpret combinations of tests in their relationships, you are way out of line. It is too much.

Matteson: Interest inventories work this way, but other tests cause problems in group interpretations.

Questioner: I find that with an achievement test you can do it, but with an I.Q. test there is an implied threat in the scores.

Matteson: I'm thinking of the Kuder Interest Inventory, for example; nobody gets hurt there.

Questioner: I would like to consider using groups to deal with the issue of student unrest that was mentioned just a little while ago. When a group of high school seniors seems unsatisfied and they want to show rebellion within the school, where do I come in as a group leader to quell this, or is it wrong to quell it? Where do I draw the line between my philosophy of how a school should exist and their feelings of how they want the school to exist?

STUDENT UNREST

Cohn: I want to make a statement which again may put me in bad stead because I am so rigid in some of my thinking. I don't think kids want a different kind of society than we have. I think their moral code is exactly the same as ours. What they want to see, though, is how much it will stretch, how far the limits really go, and whether we mean what we say. In most counseling situations I have had, say with 10th graders, they want to see if the system will hold up and if they really think it through, what would they do if they were in this principal's position? What would they do if they were parents? They come out with the same kinds of conclusions they are reacting against right now. This tends to take the edge off. Let me give an example: In a junior high school there was a principal who was not sensitive to the needs of the kids. A group I was counseling reached the point where they wanted to make a tape which I could then play for the principal. We made the tape, and the next week we heard it again to be sure this was what they wanted to say. They wanted to change it. By the end of the year we never had a tape to give to the principal because they never could put down just exactly what was bothering them. Most of this difficulty, I think, is again the self concept -- trying to find themselves. No one is giving them enough support or enough stability to latch on to, but group counseling, I think, will do a lot of this. I think student unrest is basically led by pretty sick people with very strong needs. The kids who follow are not. They are ones who are just angry at certain things they haven't had resolved. But a lot of the organizers, I feel, really would not be capable of reason. I think if there was much more group interaction on college campuses and kids could talk out their feelings, they wouldn't have the unrest they have. They would ask for change but most of the change they'd ask for would be right and legitimate, and they could achieve change in a legitimate way. That is what I think we are trying to teach these kids. If they're mad at the school system, fine. There are avenues for doing these things: let's see what we can do about it. Then give them support. Now, if you have an administration that won't allow the kids to do this, I'd back off. I would say, "I'm sorry I can't help you; do what you want to do."

Questioner: You mean you would actually verbalize it, "I can't touch this"?

Cohn: No, no. Suppose they come back and say, "We did it the way we were supposed to and we were squelched." Then I say, "I'm sorry I can't help you. You must make a decision for yourself and act on it." I would not give them support to go against the administration, but I also would not try to tell them, "You're not allowed to do that." They've got to learn this for themselves.

Questioner: You wouldn't approach it from the viewpoint of working within limits as far as they can go? You would just back off from the situation? And then stop them?

Cohn: No, they work within limits as long as they are making progress. If there is no progress, then they can try some other way but I can't support them.

Questioner: I think most of us would side with that statement. I think most of us feel that way.

Cohn: The principal would crucify me, because the kids would go and say, "Dr. Cohn said we could do this." And he would throw me out of the school.

Questioner: That's right; that's exactly how it would be interpreted.

Matteson: Something like this, but on a lesser scale, happens quite frequently with a new group, as they start tearing into a teacher or into the system. Invariably there will later be one individual who will say something good about that teacher and that breaks down the dike. Usually by, say, the 8th session if anyone says anything derogatory about a teacher it's, "Oh look, we have gone all over that; we don't want to talk about it any more. Besides, we think she is doing what is right." I think the unrest in college level students comes out basically that same way, too. I have one group of college students which is on a strictly "come-to-my-home-we'll-talk-over-a-bottle-of-beer arrangement." You would be surprised how that group has changed. There's always the one or two who have to take the first step. The group will even ask that brave first one to be the leader.

Zimpfer: Barney, are you saying that we should salt the group with role models to make sure that dike breaking is likely to happen?

Matteson: I think rather than role playing I would act very much in a Rogerian way.

Zimpfer: I'm adding to the membership of the group one youngster who is highly acceptable to the group but, at the same time, he is one whom you know will play an important qualifying, harmonizing role, or a role which stimulates the group's conscience.

Matteson: I can't honestly say that I've ever gone out and picked one. Maybe an individual would come to me and say, "Could Johnny get into our group?" I have sometimes discovered that this Johnny is his friend, and he doesn't quite have the courage to take as big a step as Johnny does. So within two or three sessions Johnny has taken that step; then his friend jumps in and they have started the avalanche. But I very seldom add a member to a group after the group has started.

Cohn: I am close to saying yes to what Dave is saying. But in a student unrest situation I would not do it because it is so volatile. In that kind of social issue I would not try to seed my group. But maybe for kids who are underachieving in school, and are against the kids who wear neckties and white shirts around school, I might want to bring in a kid who wears a white shirt but without a necktie, hoping that he would bridge the gap for us.

Matteson: Do you add to your groups, Ben, after you have started the group?

ADDING MEMBERS TO GROUPS

Cohn: No. This is in the initial construction.

Matteson: I was referring to initial composition of groups, primarily.

Zimpfer: In the case of the student unrest group, what you're sensing is a considerable amount of antagonism, and your objective in setting up the group is first of all to give it a safety valve; provide the catharsis for them.

Matteson: That's right, to permit them to function.

Zimpfer: You hope that, after draining that off, more constructive motivations will develop. Your next phase then, beyond catharsis, is to get the group to start to look at what Ben has called other avenues, other routes to satisfy themselves. Certainly going to the administration is one possibility; another possibility is including the administrator right in the group if he is willing to do this. You then act as a kind of liaison, a kind of observer who can moderate to some extent the interaction between the administration and the students in this case.

Matteson: But the group has to reach a certain point, as Ben said, before you can bring anybody into it. I recall that you sat in on a couple of my sessions one time and I think one group actually invited you to join the session, to pull a chair up and join the circle. They said, "Don't sit back there and say nothing, come on in."

Zimpfer:

SELLING GROUP COUNSELING TO STUDENTS

Placing certain students into groups is also a means of selling group work to the student body. There are certain kinds of kids who are very acceptable and looked up to in a school. I think the Coleman findings on the adolescent subculture gives us data on things we have suspected all along: that the athlete in high school, for example, is the highly attractive individual. If you can locate the athletes in a school who are amenable to the idea of group counseling, it's amazing what an entourage they will bring along with them once they've started to work with you.

INITIATING GROUP COUNSELING

The whole business of getting group counseling initiated revolves on finding the right place to begin. We have considered orienting the kids in group guidance classes. We have talked about it in terms of trying to promote receptivity on the part of teachers and administrators. I have just talked about it here in terms of working with highly attractive students. There are many different ways that you might try to promote a selling situation for it. If we present it as a kind of a mystical thing, a kind of something that only a few people in the world can do, we are only putting blocks in the way, I think, instead of selling and opening it up. As I look at counselor education students, I try to get them to think through ways of promoting counseling, getting it institutionalized, getting teachers involved as

co-counselors, or getting involved with parent groups -- any possible ways to get it on the officially acceptable list of things to do within the school.

Matteson: In order to form groups, I have to take children out of class in the 7th and 8th grade because they have no study halls. After a while you get to the point where they ask, "When can I get into a group?" I want to get out of that language class or that math class. It becomes a tremendous motivating force.

Questioner: It may not be completely understood by the French teacher.

Matteson: True.

Schmidt: Your relationship with the teachers is a problem in the elementary school. You don't have study halls, and don't want to always pull the youngster out of gym.

Matteson: While pulling them from class is motivating to the student, the teachers, as Dave says, have to be drawn in and understood. I constantly am reporting to them or having lunch with them and bringing them up to date on the discussion for the day.

Cohn: One of our schools developed a schedule by which they would take the first period for group counseling this week, second period next week, and third period another week; in this way the pupils don't miss too much of a given class.

Matteson: But even then there are teachers who are concerned just because the youngsters are down in your office; and if you take five out of that class they are threatened.

THE VALUE OF GROUP EXPERIENCE FOR COUNSELORS

Questioner: We started at one point to talk about the need of counselor trainees to have group experiences as members themselves. Another way of putting it might be that nobody should be a leader unless he has been a group member. Can we summarize the opinions on this?

Cohn: I agree with Dave that we should be involved in a group experience as part of the training program for counselors. While it is beneficial, I don't think it is absolutely necessary for him to have it; however, it adds to his training. What I believe makes my relationship with kids rather effective is that I am continually asking myself "why." When I don't know what I'm supposed to do in a group, I ask the kids what I'm supposed to do. When I get to a dead-end with a kid I say, "What should I do next?" You know, "What's wrong? Why aren't we moving?" Any time I have any questions at all and I'm stuck, I'll throw it back to the group and I continually learn from my group. We should be willing to do more of this. Why do we have to have all the answers? I've learned much about adolescence from my group experiences.

Questioner: It is rewarding to be able to level with a group.

SEQUENCE OF TOPICS IN GROUP COUNSELING

Cohn: I can just watch some groups develop. I can sit there and smile and maybe even sometimes smile openly and the kids will see it. I see them progressing and I know full well that in 15 or 20 minutes they're going to be right there, and in two more sessions they're going to be right there. They deal with their perceptions of the four important groups: parents, teachers, siblings, and peers. Teachers come first, then come parents, then come siblings, and then come peers. If you take your tapes and analyze them it's generally in that order. Teachers are the least threatening. Teachers are like parents; parents usually are problems because of their relationships with their children. The thing that is most sensitive to children is their peer relationships. If their peers don't accept them and they have difficulty there, that's the final evaluation and it hurts. If they don't start off on teachers, or off on the school I begin to worry, but they do get to it finally.

Questioner: That's true for adolescents. The elementary school child doesn't start with the teachers. Sometimes it is parents but often they go right to their peers.

Cohn: Right. I'll say peers.

Schmidt: Peers and siblings, I think.

Questioner: What's the outcome of all this if everybody in America participates to the limit. There will be no more need for counseling and everyone is open with each other.

Cohn: It would be a miserable place. This is one of the comments you get from the friends of a person who has been in group therapy: His friends say, "You used to be so nice. You didn't say all those nasty things before." It is very difficult to live with a person who has been going through group therapy, and the process isn't complete yet. Every time he gets a feeling he spurts it out. When I took over a group therapy session for a psychiatrist 5 or 6 years ago, one woman said, "I had a horrible time yesterday. I was ironing my husband's shirt and while I was ironing it I got this feeling about not liking him. As I kept ironing I kept thinking how I didn't like him, and I kept wondering why, and while I was wondering I burned the shirt." This is symbolic. It takes a long time to work out these feelings.

Zimpfer: What is being asked is a question we just touched on this morning but did not resolve at all: How ultimate are the

ULTIMATE EFFECT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

effects of guidance and counseling? My position is, that by and large, I see the efforts of guidance counselors as making counselees aware a little bit here and a little bit there, providing a bit of encouragement, an assist toward decision making, a move toward improving a person's image of himself. But I'm not sure that we can put on our shoulders the burden of trying to make everybody a full functioning person by the time he leaves school, or by the time he concludes a particular series of counseling

sessions with us. When the question was asked, "Aren't we supposed to bring kids to the point of having generalized decision-making capacities and therefore doesn't that end the need for counseling?", I say I'm not sure that we're ever going to reach that utopia, that end of need for more interaction. I can help a person move along but I can't really step into his shoes and push him all the way up to completion. I try to approach the counseling function rather humbly.

I am concerned, too, about the faddism of groups. In the last several years we've moved more and more towards the group phenomenon here in our United States, with T groups and human relations training and development groups, and sensitivity groups, and marathons, and group counseling, and encounter groups. I'm not sure what 25 years of exposure to this is going to do. I don't have that kind of a long-range view. If we start out getting people to be open and honest and if we mean by being open and honest that we are to express our hostility, what we are doing is reinforcing the idea that hostility is important and is acceptable and is the best thing you can possibly do. This bothers me. Spontaneity in the real sense is not giving out with your hostility. Spontaneity has been interpreted altogether too often recently as hostility release, because we look at the early stages of counseling and therapy, the cathartic stages, as if these are the only things that happen. But really, spontaneity is linked with respect and responsibility to others, and feeling for the other person's views. Emotional release results either in a rechanneling or a reconstructing, or eventually gives way to an inner direction -- something that puts a person back in some kind of control, allows him to be able to deal with his peers and cope with the situation around him and also feel satisfied with himself. That calls for the follow-through function we talked about before. Without it we haven't really done anybody any service. This thought may not lighten the counselor's load, but it is crucial to keep in mind.